Mrs GRIFFITH.

The Double Mistake

Comedy in five acts

By

MRS. ELIZABETH GRIFFITH.

1766.

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
WARWICK
LIBRARY

The Gift of
Mrs G.F. Hall

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK LIBRARY

00245143

THE

DOUBLE MISTAKE.

A

COMEDY.

As it is PERFORMED at the

THEATRE-ROYAL IN COVENT-GARDEN.

Depressa resurgam.

LONDON:

Printed for J. ALMON, opposite Burlington-House in Piccadilly; T. LOWNDES in Fleet-Street; S. BLADON in Pater-noster-Row; and J. WILLIAMS, next the Mitre Tavern in Fleet-Street.

M.DCC.LXVI.

[Price One Shilling and Six Pence.]

Dramatis Perſonæ.

MEN.

Lord Belmont,	*Mr.* Ross.
Sir Charles Somerville,	*Mr.* Smith.
Mr. Belmont,	*Mr.* Shuter.
Mr. Southerne,	*Mr.* Dunstall.
Elder Freeman,	*Mr.* Hull.
Younger Freeman,	*Mr.* Dyer.
Thomas, *Servant to Mr.* Belmont,	*Mr.* Holtom.
Ralph, *Servant to Younger* Freeman,	*Mr.* Cushing.
Two Men Servants.	

WOMEN.

Lady Bridget Belmont,	*Mrs.* Walker.
Lady Mary Belmont,	*Miſs* Macklin.
Lady Louiſa Belmont,	*Miſs* Wilford.
Emily Southerne,	*Mrs.* Mattocks.
A Maid Servant.	

SCENE, LONDON.

TO HER GRACE THE

Ducheſs of MARLBOROUGH,

THIS Comedy is moſt humbly inſcribed, by one whoſe work and wiſhes, inconſiderable as they are, ſhould ever be dedicated to her noble family, and who is alſo ſenſible of the higheſt reſpect for her Grace's merit, and truly amiable character, and who has the honour to be,

Her GRACE'S

moſt humble, and

moſt obedient Servant,

The AUTHOR.

Mrs. Mary Griffith

PROLOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mr. SMITH.

TO lead attention thro' five acts of proſe,
Where to ſoft notes no tuneful couplet flows,
To pleaſe each heart, each judgment, eye and ear,
The attempt how bold! the labour how ſevere!
Thus I addreſs'd our bard; who quick reply'd
With honeſt diffidence, and modeſt pride:
"If I ſhould fail, I ſhall not think it ſhame
"To miſs what few have gain'd, the wreath of fame.
"This ſpot I deem the public treaſury,
"Where wits, rare coins, for general ſervice lye;
"Where critics, ſtrict examiners, are plac'd
"To try each piece by that nice ſtandard, taſte;
"And what to public uſe may be apply'd,
"Is juſtly ſav'd, what faulty, thrown aſide.
"Hence, 'tis the Poet's duty to diſpenſe
"Each various vein of humour, wit, or ſenſe;
"Not miſer-like, to his own hoard confine
"The ſmalleſt ſpark of nature's genuine mine;
"But to the muſe his grateful tribute pay,
"And in the common mint his quota lay."
On this reſolve, he to your ſterling ſtore
Preſents a ſpecimen of untry'd ore;
If any worth it bears, aſſay'd by you,
His private talent is the public due;
And ſhould it not diſgrace your brilliant maſs,
Give it your ſtamp, and let the metal paſs.

THE

THE

DOUBLE MISTAKE.

A

COMEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

An apartment in Lord Belmont's *houſe.*

Enter Lord Belmont, *reading a letter, a ſervant following.*

Lord BELMONT.

MY compliments to the lady, and I will inſtantly attend her. Order James to bring the chariot to the door directly. [*Exit* Servant.

The more I think of this extraordinary ſummons, the more I am ſurpris'd at it. Emily Southern, my near relation, at an inn in London, and deſires to ſee me!—I tremble for the cauſe; for though by no means infected with Spaniſh jealouſy, I look upon it that the honour of every woman in my family, leſſens or increaſes mine.

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. Good-morrow, nephew, I am glad to ſee you up ſo early; I wonder how the folks, that lye a-bed, ever get through the buſineſs of the day; for my part, though I riſe ever ſo ſoon, I am in a perfect hurry, from morning to night.

L. Bel. I ſhou'd imagine, ſir, that a little regularity might prevent your being ſo much embarraſs'd. —Method makes all things eaſy.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Your lordſhip's chariot is ready. [*Exit.*

Bel. That's lucky.—Will you be ſo kind, my lord, as to take me along with you, as far as the Tower? There is a wharfinger there, who, I am told, is poſſeſs'd of an ineſtimable treaſure: a Roman ring made of iron, which, for ought we know, might have belong'd to the mighty Julius himſelf.

Enter Thomas.

Tho. Sir, [*to Mr.* Belmont] the gentleman is below, whom you deſired to wait on you about the tulip roots: he ſays there is a cargo juſt arriv'd from Holland, and if you don't make haſte, the choice ones will be gone immediately.

Bel. Was ever man ſo unfortunate! Well, my lord, you ſee I can't wait on you, at preſent; but I beg you will not go to the wharfinger's alone, nor buy the ring till I ſee it.

L. Bel. You may depend upon me, ſir: I ſhall not even go within a mile of the place; my engagements lye another way. [*Exit.*

Bel. That's well, that's well; get me my cloak: no, get me a chair, I'll go directly to the man that has the macaw birds, and the cocatoo's, and buy me ſome of them immediately.

Tho. The gentleman waits about the tulips, ſir.

Bel. Odſo, odſo, I forgot; was ever any poor man ſo hurry'd as I am!

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Sir, there is a man below, that ſays you deſired him to call with ſome fine ſhells.

Bel. What ſhall I do? Well, I will ſee the man with the ſhells. [*going, returns*] There again, I am undone, my ſpectacles are at Margaſs's. You muſt ſtep to my ſiſter, Lady Bridget, and deſire her to lend me hers [*To* Thomas.

Tho.

Tho. I don't believe, ſir, her ladyſhip uſes ſpectacles; at leaſt I ſhould be afraid to offend her, by aſking.

Bel. Not uſe ſpectacles, and near threeſcore! ha, ha, ha, very fine, indeed: but come, Thomas, get my cloak; I'll take a turn in the Park, and then to the Cocoa-tree, to hear the news of the day, and peruſe the advertiſements.—I have a world of buſineſs on my hands, that's certain. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A chamber in an inn.*

Enter Emily.

Emi. There lives not, ſurely, on this globe, a wretch ſo loſt, ſo totally forlorn, as I am. In one ſad moment depriv'd of friends and fame. But what are theſe to the ſharp pangs that rend my tortur'd heart, for his unkindneſs, who ſhould heal my grief, aſſert my innocence, and clear my fame? But he, alas! thinks meanly of me, and in that thought the meaſure of my ſorrow is accompliſh'd.—I am a wretch, indeed!

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Madam, the gentleman you ſent to is below, and deſires to ſee you.

Emi. Shew him in—[*Exit* Servant.] How ſhall I tell my ſtory, how make my innocence appear?

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. That I am glad to ſee you any where, my dear Emily, this viſit will evince; but, I confeſs, I am ſurpriz'd at meeting you in ſuch a place as this, when I, who have the honour of being ſo nearly related to you, am maſter of a houſe in London. I think your billet ſaid you were alone. I now expect you will explain this myſtery, by other means than tears and bluſhes.—Pray ſpeak, and clear my doubts.

Emi. Innocence ſhou'd be bold, my lord; but maiden innocence is full of fear. Pray pardon my heſitation; I know not how, or where I ſhall begin.

L. Bel. Recollect your ſpirits, and be aſſur'd you ſpeak to one, who, to the utmoſt of his power, will prove a brother to you.—My ſiſters too, I'll anſwer for them, when once acquainted with your perſon and merit, will be your ſiſters alſo.

Emi. Your kindneſs has encouraged me. Your lordſhip knows my mother died while I was yet an infant, and that my father married ſoon again.—From that unhappy hour, I became an alien to his heart and perſon; under pretence of education, I was ſent to ſchool, where I received the honour of your lordſhip's frequent and friendly viſits, and remain'd there 'till about two years ſince.—Wou'd I had never left it!

L. Bel. Pray proceed.

Emi. The taunts, the cruelties I met at home, are not to be deſcrib'd. 'Till about ſix weeks ſince, there was a match propoſed to me, with the moſt deteſtable of men, which I, proſtrate at my father's feet, and bathing them with tears, refuſed.

L. Bel. He cou'd not ſure attempt to force your hand?

Emi. Every argument was uſed to perſuade, every threat to terrify me, into compliance, but in vain. During this time of perſecution, my father's ill health obliged him to viſit Bath; I was permitted to attend him, upon promiſing to try to conquer my averſion to this hated marriage.—I promiſed any thing, to gain a reſpite.

L. Bel. As you deſcribe your ſituation, I cannot blame you.—But was it averſion to the match propoſed, or prepoſſeſſion for ſome other object, that ruled your will? I beg you will be ſincere. Your bluſhes anſwer me.—But go on.

Emi. I do not mean, my lord, to hide a ſingle thought; ſincerity is the fair garb of virtue, and they who know no guilt, need no diſguiſe. At Bath, I

met

met a gentleman, whom I had known at ſchool, his ſiſter was my friend and favourite there, and, in my childiſh days, he uſed to call himſelf my lover.—Even then I thought him, as ſure he is this moment, the moſt amiable of his ſex.

L. Bel. Poor Emily, I begin to tremble for you.

Emi. This gentleman renew'd his former courtſhip, if I may be allow'd the term, while my firſt impreſſions recurr'd with added ſtrength. He aſked me of my father, who abſolutely refus'd, and forbad me ever to ſee him more—cruel, inhuman ſentence!

L. Bel. This was indeed ſevere.

Emi. I received a billet from him, requeſting me to ſee him when the family were retired to reſt. My father had ordered every thing to be got ready for leaving Bath next day.

L. Bel. And you, of courſe, conſented to this haſt adieu?

Emi. He came, and while he uttered the tendereſt vows of everlaſting love, we heard a noiſe in my cloſet, to which he flew, and, on forcing it open, to our mutual aſtoniſhment, a gentleman ruſhed out. My dear, deceived, unhappy lover, called on him to draw; and, caſting a look of rage, mix'd with contempt, at me, ſaid, "Life is no longer worth my "care, thy perfidy has made it hateful to me." I threw myſelf between their ſwords, and ſcream'd ſo loud, that it brought my father, and all the family, into the room. At ſight of him, my terror and confuſion redoubled. I ran down ſtairs into the ſtreet, without knowing whither I went, or what to do. The night coach was ſetting off for London, at that moment; I got into it, without determining on any thing, but that I wou'd not return; and hither it has brought me.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Sir Charles Somerville has this moment alighted at the door, and ſeeing your lordſhip's

chariot there, begs leave to pay his reſpects to you. [*Exit.*

Emi. Quick, let me fly, my lord. [*Runs to the door.*

L. Bel. You'll meet him that way. Into this cloſet; I will not ſuffer him to keep you long a priſoner. [*She goes into the cloſet.*

Enter Sir Charles Somerville.

L. Bel. Welcome to London, my dear Charles; but to what happy chance are we indebted for your return? I underſtood that you meant to paſs a philoſophical ſummer, at your ſeat in the weſt, in reading and retirement. But it grew dull, I ſuppoſe; it wou'd not do, Sir Charles; tho' you have not made a very long trial of it, I think, neither.

Sir Cha. I have not indeed, my lord, made the ſmalleſt attempt towards the rational ſcheme you hint at. Thoughts of a very different nature have, for ſome time paſt, wholly occupied my mind, and left no room for any thing beſide, but friendſhip, and Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Lord Belmont is much yours. But from this ſententious ſpeech, and that grave countenance, I think I may, without being a conjuror, pronounce, that the gay and lively Sir Charles Somerville is on the point of matrimony with ſome well-jointur'd widow, or rich heireſs; and that he is, at this very moment, making an exact calculation of the fortune he ſhall allot to his ſeventh ſon, by, and of that marriage lawfully begotten.

Sir Char. Your lordſhip was never more miſtaken. —So far from it, that I have bid adieu to the whole ſex, and am determin'd to quit England, in a few days, with a firm purpoſe never to reviſit it. [*A loud ſigh heard from the cloſet.*] Ha! whence cou'd that ſigh proceed?

L. Bel. Sir Charles, I beg a thouſand pardons, but I muſt entreat you to withdraw immediately, and requeſt the pleaſure of meeting you at my houſe, in half an hour.

Sir

Sir Char. I ſhall obey your commands, but can ſcarce forgive your ſuffering my preſent intruſion. [*Exit.*

Lord Belmont *opens the cloſet.*

L. Bel. Emily! She faints!

Emi. Be not alarmed, my lord, the cloſeneſs of the place overcame my ſpirits; I ſhall recover ſoon: but is Sir Charles reſolv'd then? does he leave England immediately? what have I ſaid! I mean, my lord, is the gentleman quite gone? is there no fear of his returning? one is apt to rave after fainting, you know, my lord.

L. Bel. There is method in your madneſs, Emily; but tho' I dare ſay you did not mean to truſt me with the name of your lover, be aſſured I am extremely pleas'd at diſcovering him in the perſon of my friend Sir Charles Somerville.

Emi. He is, indeed, my lord, the object of my hopes, and my deſpair; but to what purpoſe do I own my paſſion? he quits his native land, to fly from me!

L. Bel. Be patient, Emily—from his known character of truth, and honour, I am certain he will do you juſtice; dare you abide that teſt?

Emi. Moſt willingly, my lord.

L. Bel. The way to hope for candour from Somerville, the world, and me, is by a frank confeſſion. Who was that gentleman he found concealed?

Emi. By all my hopes of candour from the world, of eſteem from you, and love from Somerville, I know him not; nor why, or wherefore he came thither.

L. Bel. I muſt believe you, Emily; there is a charm in truth, that ſtrikes upon the mind, like light upon our eyes.—'Tis irreſiſtible. Yet paſſion, I will grant, may caſt a veil on either; I therefore can excuſe Sir Charles for judging wrong.

Emi. Oh! blame him not, my lord, appearances were ſtrong againſt me; but while we talk, he flies.

L. Bel. Your fears are thoſe of love, but let them reſt; and be aſſur'd he ſhall not break the double toil, that love and friendſhip ſpread to hold him faſt. But come, my Emily, I am impatient 'till I place you in a fitter ſituation, and preſent you to my ſiſters.

Emi. By no means, my lord; think how improper it would be for me to appear in your houſe, or any where in my own character, 'till time ſhall have unravell'd this cruel myſtery. Scandal has as many wings as tongues, and in a few hours, I may expect to be the general ſubject of diſcourſe, and object of reproach. Beſides, you may ſuppoſe my father will purſue me, and, if under your roof, I muſt be diſcover'd.

L. Bel. Your objections are juſt, and yet you can be no where ſo ſafe, as under my protection. Suppoſe then you were to be introduc'd to my aunt and ſiſters, who have never ſeen you, under a feign'd name and character, as the daughter of a clergyman, a particular friend of mine; they have often heard me ſpeak of ſuch a perſon, who has been ſome years dead, his name was Lawſon.

Emi. I put myſelf under your lordſhips guidance, and ſhall aſſume whatever form you pleaſe, 'till heaven thinks fit to let me wear my own with honour.

L. Bel. I hope you will not continue long in maſquerade; but now, my dear, your hand. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *A dreſſing-room in Lord* Belmont's *houſe, Lady* Mary *at work, and Lady* Louiſa *with a book in her hand.*

L. Mar. My dear ſiſter, let me diſſuade you from carrying on this affair with Mr. Freeman any farther; if he really loves you, and his family and fortune may pretend to ſuch a match, why not conſult my brother? who has an undoubted right to be conſidered as a father, from having acted on all occaſions like one.

L. Loui. You have very vulgar notions, ſiſter; I ſuppoſe if you ſhou'd ever have a lover, you will bid him aſk your parents whether you ſhall like him or not? —poor ſoul! but is it aunt Bridget, or uncle Frank, he ſhall apply to? ha, ha! Do you know, my dear, that as well as I love my Strephon, if he were to ſay one ſyllable about me to my grave brother, it is an hundred to one, I ſhou'd deteſt him. Secrecy is the very eſſence of love, and like all other eſſences, it will evaporate, the moment it gets air.

L. Mar. I am ſorry to differ ſo much in opinion with you, Louiſa, but I can't help thinking that the moſt innocent correſpondence, which can poſſibly ſubſiſt between men and women, becomes in ſome degree criminal, when it is carried on clandeſtinely; at leaſt, it muſt appear as if one party was aſham'd of the other, which you muſt allow to be a ſentiment, by no means conſiſtent with heroic love.

L. Loui. Read, read, my dear, and improve yourſelf, for you are really very ignorant; did you ever hear of a heroine, in tragedy, or romance, who conſulted any third perſon, in the diſpoſal of her heart?

L. Mar. I can't ſay I have read many of either; but to ſuch over-weening confidence in ourſelves, I believe we are indebted for many tragical ſubjects.

L. Loui. A truce! a truce! dear girl; and for this once, aſſiſt me. It is impoſſible I can refuſe to ſee him this evening, when he ſo ardently intreats it; in your grave mathematical calculation, he has been abſent three weeks, but that, you know, is three thouſand years, in a lover's calendar.

L. Mar. My dear Louiſa, I will, tho' againſt my judgment, to the utmoſt of my power, aſſiſt you; but if my lord ſhould paſs the evening at home, I cannot gueſs how it is poſſible, without alarming him; or, what is much worſe, making confidants of the ſervants, to effect your purpoſe.

L. Loui. Give me your aid, and leave the reſt to me.

Enter

Enter Lady Bridget.

L. Brid. Your ſervant, ladies—what, at work? you are a moſt indefatigable creature, niece Mary, and ſometimes remind me of thoſe induſtrious maidens, that work'd beds and hangings, as I have heard my grandmother ſay; for thoſe mechanical amuſements were entirely out of faſhion, before my youth was capable of inſtruction.

L. Mar. Your ladyſhip has given up your time to more abſtruſe and difficult employments, the ſtudy of the learned languages; but as every perſon may not have capacity, or inclination, to employ their minds in that way, I look upon works of fancy as pleaſing and innocent amuſements.

L. Brid. They are perfectly ſimple, indeed, and, of courſe, may be innocent.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Good morrow, ladies; have you enliven'd the Park with your preſence this morning, Louiſa? or ſtaid at home on the rational plan of reading and working, by turns, with Lady Mary?—I hope I ſee you in good health, madam? [*To Lady* Bridget.

L. Brid. Tolerable, not exuberant, I thank your lordſhip.

L. Loui. We have been quite on the domeſtic plan, my lord, and, of courſe, extremely dull.

L. Mar. We have felt the loſs of your lordſhip's company, who are generally ſo good to make yourſelf the maſter of our revels.

L. Brid. That's a bad phraſe, niece; revels imply revelling, which is a term indecent for ſo young a lady to make uſe of. I declare, I was turned of twenty, before I cou'd be prevail'd on to pronounce the word jollity; and then it was at the earneſt intreaty of poor dear Mr. Feeble, that I wou'd give it utterance. It was a dying requeſt, for he expired of a galloping conſumption, in a few hours after I had granted his deſire.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. As I cou'd wiſh to juſtify Lady Mary's expreſſion, I will for this once take upon me the character her politeneſs has aſſign'd me, by making a preſent to ye all, that will, I hope, both improve, and enlarge the circle of your pleaſures.

L. Loui. [*aſide*] What can it be, ſiſter? I die to know.

L. Brid. Some improvement, I ſuppoſe, nephew, in the Encyclopœdia; there are many ſciences yet left imperfect.

L. Bel. No, madam, it is a living volume I mean to offer to your inſpection, and I think a fair one. 'Tis the daughter of my old friend, Mr. Lawſon, who is come to town upon buſineſs, and I have intreated her to make this houſe her own.

L. Mar. We ſhall doubtleſs do every thing, in our power, to render it agreeable to her.

L. Bel. I will preſent her to you inſtantly. [*Exit.*

L. Brid. Her father was a very learned divine, and who can tell but ſhe may underſtand the rabbinical text? O! if ſhe can but tranſlate the Lexicon, I ſhall be quite happy.

Enter Lord Belmont, *preſenting* Emily.

L. Bel. I hope, madam, you will now conſider yourſelf as in a brother's houſe, and as another ſiſter to theſe two ladies.

Emi. If they will condeſcend to accept my friendſhip and eſteem, they ſhall be truly theirs.

L. Mar. We thankfully receive, and ſhall endeavour to deſerve them both, by ſending ours to meet them more than half way.—Fye, ſiſter, why are you ſo cold? Pray ſpeak. [*Aſide to* Louiſa.

L. Loui. [*to L.* Mary.] She is vaſtly handſome—Every perſon who has the pleaſure of ſeeing you, madam, muſt neceſſarily feel ſuch a prepoſſeſſion in your favour, as willingly to accept what you ſo kindly offer.

L. Brid.

L. Brid. Very courtly and correctly ſpoken on all ſides, my lord; but ladies, the hour appropriated to the adornment of our perſons draws near, and I ſhall requeſt the favour of this young lady to accompany me to the temple of the graces, or, in other words, the toilet. [*Aſide.*] I think that was elegantly expreſs'd, and muſt inſpire her with a proper idea of my erudition.

Emi. I ſhall eſteem it an honour to attend your ladyſhip. [*Lord* Belmont *bows, as taking leave.*

L. Brid. Is your lordſhip alſo on the wing? Come then, you ſhall conduct us. [*Exeunt Lord* Belmont, *Lady* Bridget, *and* Emily.

L. Loui. There are ſome very odd whims come into my head about this girl, ſiſter; ſhe is quite a beauty, nay, ſeems accompliſh'd too; a clergyman's daughter! that's the old ſtory. But in ſhort, Maria, I begin to think this wiſe brother of ours has his failings, like other men, and growing indolent, as they all do, chuſes to bring his favourites near home: did you obſerve with what an enquiring eye he looked at you? He thought he might eaſily impoſe on poor aunt Bridget and me, but he is miſtaken. Was this his fine preſent?

L. Mar. For ſhame, Louiſa, how can you think ſo badly of a man who has deſerv'd ſo well? Left to his care, even from our earlieſt years, what tenderneſs, what delicacy has he not ſhewn, both to our ſex and age?

L. Loui. I grant the utmoſt; but ſtill there is a ſomewhat that ſtrikes upon my mind, and tells me there is myſtery in this affair; and I am determin'd to find it out, if I can.

L. Mar. Indeed, ſiſter, there is ſomething very ungenerous in ſuſpicion; if the tenor of our lives cannot exempt us from cenſure, with reſpect to this world, we act virtuouſly in vain.

L. Loui. O! for heaven's ſake, my dear, let us have done with this wiſe diſcourſe; it actually gives me

me the vapours, and I wou'd tune my ſpirits to their higheſt key, for Freeman will be here to-night. "Winds, catch the ſound."

L. Mar. Poſitively, ſiſter, if you abridge my morality, I muſt inſiſt on an abatement of your tranſports.

L. Loui. Well then,

"Form'd by thy converſe, happily I'll ſteer,
"From grave to gay, from lively to ſevere."

Is not that quite civil now?

L. Mar. Vaſtly polite, indeed.

L. Loui. But ſtill this moſt important buſineſs remains unſettled—Let me conſider—Have you a pocket-almanack?

L. Mar. Not about me; but prithee why do you aſk?

L. Loui. No matter, he ſhall come thro' the garden by moon-light.

L. Mar. What, whether the moon ſhines, or no?

L. Mar. I know it will; Cynthia's the lover's friend, and lends her ſilver lamp to light them on their way.

L. Mar. Again in heroics, Louiſa?

L. Loui. I have done—His letter ſays, his ſervant will be here in an hour, from my fair hand to receive his maſter's doom—Is not that galant, ſiſter?

L. Mar. Yes; but I dare ſay he does not apprehend your ladyſhip's ſentence ſhou'd ordain the dagger, or the bowl.

L. Loui. No truly, I ſhall be a merciful judge; his doom will not be death.

L. Mar. You ſeem, at preſent, a very compleat emblem of juſtice; for in my humble opinion, you are acting blindfold, tho' you might ſee if you pleas'd.

L. Loui. Ne'er let that bandage from my eyes remove,
Which hides the faults of him I fondly love. [*Exeunt.*

END *of the* FIRST ACT.

ACT

ACT II. SCENE I.

A drawing-room in Lord Belmont's *houſe.*

Enter Lord Belmont *and Sir* Charles Somerville.

Sir Char. I Have now, my lord, frankly related to you all the circumſtances of this extraordinary novel, except the lady's name, which I hope, for her ſake, will ever remain a ſecret. What the denoüement will be on her part, I cannot gueſs, but am determin'd it ſhall not conclude in the uſual ſtile with me; for, from this hour, I diſclaim all future thoughts of a ſerious connection with any of the ſex.

L. Bel. Is it poſſible, Sir Charles, that paſſion can ſo far triumph over reaſon, as in one moment to deſtroy the good opinion of a character, form'd on a long acquaintance? You ſay you knew the lady from her childhood?

Sir Char. My dear Belmont, you have ſtated this argument quite wrong, it was not paſſion that triumph'd over reaſon, but reaſon that ſubdued paſſion. I can now ſee, nay feel, what an abject wretch he muſt be, who truſts his happineſs in a woman's power—damn'd, ſmiling miſchiefs, all!—I will, henceforth, ſee, and admire the pretty baubles, as I wou'd a fine piece of china, but no more attribute worth and honour to them, than maleability to that; for if my Emily cou'd deceive, there is no truth in woman.

L. Bel. This is mere common-place, Sir Charles.

Sir Char. By calling it common, my lord, you allow it the general ſenſe of mankind, which is, no doubt, founded on experience. I am therefore determined to profit by it, ſo far as to retain my freedom at leaſt. I think I almoſt feel the ſhackles I might have worn, but for the old gentleman's refuſal. —Oh! how I thank him!

L. Bel. Perhaps you misplace your gratitude. I am not yet sure that you are under any manner of obligation to him.

Sir Char. Certainly the greatest, tho' his refusal then was daggers to my heart.—Fool that I was, I thought her what she seem'd, an angel; and, but for him, Ixion like, I had embrac'd a cloud. But why do I still talk, or think of her! she is not worth a thought, and I hope to get quite clear of her idea, before I reach Harwich.

L. Bel. Believe me, you deceive yourself; her form will haunt you, fly where'er you will, and for the same reason that murderers fancy ghosts—for I am persuaded you have injur'd her.

Sir Char. What shall I not believe my eyes! by heaven, the consciousness of her guilt even conquer'd female fear; she threw herself upon a madman's sword, such I then was; but 'twas to save her lover, and my rival; ungrateful woman!

L. Bel. You seem inclin'd to lay hold of the dark side of every circumstance; but there is one you seem not yet to have attended to, or you cou'd not think of leaving England immediately. May not the gentleman, you encounter'd in your mistress's chamber, possibly suppose you fled from him?

Sir Cha. That thought had quite escap'd me. I left a servant behind, whom I expect this night, in order to discover who my rival was; and also to find out what her father had done, or meant to do, with his unworthy, yet too lovely daughter: I fear he will use her cruelly, my lord.

L. Bel. And can you think of that, and talk of quitting England?

Sir Char. Why, faith, my lord, I have always look'd upon chivalry as a very ridiculous science, and yet I begin to think it has its foundation in nature, for I never yet heard of a damsel in distress, that I did not wish to relieve her.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. Sir Charles, this affair is much too ſerious to jeſt with. You have aſked my opinion, and, as a man of honour, and your friend, I now declare, I think your travelling ſcheme ſhou'd be entirely laid aſide, until this myſtery is properly explain'd. Notwithſtanding your affected gaiety, I am certain you ſtill love this lady.

Sir Char. There again, your lordſhip is guilty of a ſmall error, only miſtaking the paſt for the preſent tenſe; ſay I did love her, if you pleaſe.

L. Bel. Well, Sir Charles, grant you no longer love, you are certainly a man of honour, and muſt therefore think it incumbent on you to clear a lady's character, which may poſſibly have ſuffered as much on your account, in the minds of others, as ſhe has done in yours, from this unlucky accident.

Sir Char. Wou'd to heaven that I cou'd clear her to my own heart, from all ſuſpicion, with as much juſtice, as I can to the world, of what relates to me; in her whole conduct and behaviour towards me, ſhe was purity herſelf, her ſoul ſeem'd even lovelier than her form, and caſt a kind of glory round her beauty, which, while it awed, tranſported, raiſed, and chaſtis'd deſire—yet ſhe is falſe!

L. Bel. I cannot think ſo.

Sir Char. Be that as it may, your lordſhip has convinc'd me that I ſhou'd not leave London for a few days; within that term, or never, a clue will certainly be found, to lead us thro' this maze; I therefore will abide the event; certain it can't be worſe than what I fear.

L. Bel. I muſt inſiſt on your acquainting me with every ſtep you take. You know you may command me on the moſt difficult occaſions.

Sir Char. I certainly rely on your lordſhip's friendſhip.

L. Bel. The moment your ſervant arrives, pray let me know; I cannot tell you how much I am intereſted in this affair.—I ſhall be at home all day.

Sir

Sir Char. I ſhall call upon your lordſhip in the evening.

L. Bel. 'Till then adieu. [*Exeunt ſeverally.*

SCENE II. *A dreſſing-room in Lord* Belmont's *houſe, Lady* Bridget *at her toilet,* Emily *ſitting, and a maid-ſervant attending.*

L. Brid. In what part of Albion was your father benefic'd, Miſs Lawſon? Had he livings in commendam, or did he only ſerve a ſimple cure?—You are abominably aukward. [*To the maid.*

Emi. [*aſide*] What ſhall I ſay?

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. O Lady Bridget, ſiſter, wou'd you believe it, I am cheated, impos'd upon, to the laſt degree. The man that ſold me the blue-bird, with the ſcarlet head, has deceived me; it is only painted. He call'd it the true blue-bird of paradiſe, but he is the true ſerpent of it, and has bit me. Odſo! I beg pardon, who is that pretty lady?

L. Brid. Upon my word, brother, you ſeem to be verging towards the ſtate of ſecond childhood. You act directly like a baby, one moment purchaſing toys, and the next weary of them. But as the great Mr. Dryden obſerves, "Men are but children of a larger "growth." I hope you are an admirer of Mr. Dryden, Miſs Lawſon?

Emi. All perſons of ſenſe and taſte, madam, I believe, admire his writings; and tho' I by no means pretend to either of thoſe characters, I join my humble ſuffrage.

Bel. Odſo! ſhe talks very handſomely, Lady Bridget; I have a great notion ſhe is very learned. Pray, madam, do you underſtand coins?

Emi. Not in the leaſt, ſir.

Bel. I am ſorry for it, becauſe if you did, I wou'd have treated you with a ſight of my beſt Otho; it has the true green mold on it, and is ſo very antique,

that all traces of the figure are worn out, ſo that it looks for all the world like a bit of plain copper.

L. Brid. And ſo, to be ſure, it is. Pray, brother, don't expoſe yourſelf, and interrupt our converſation.

Bel. Why, there it is now; you don't like to hear any one talk but yourſelf, Lady Bridget; but I won't hold my tongue, for all that. I'll go this moment, and fetch my Otho, and the lady ſhall be judge whether it is not a fine one; and if ſhe ſays it is, I'll make her a preſent of it, to vex you.

Emi. I muſt beg to be excus'd, ſir; I can by no means think of depriving you of a treaſure, that wou'd be totally uſeleſs to me.

Bel. [*aſide*] I am afraid ſhe is but ſilly.——Uſeleſs, madam! an Otho uſeleſs! I muſt beg pardon.

Emi. I only ſaid it wou'd be ſo to me, ſir, who am not a virtuoſo, and want taſte to know its value.

L. Brid. This abſurd converſation is an outrage on my patience, which I can no longer ſubmit to. Pray, brother, give me leave;—I ſhould be glad to know, Miſs Lawſon, if your father bequeath'd you any ancient manuſcripts, in the Hebrew, or Greek languages?

Bel. O ſiſter! dear Lady Bridget! let me enquire about them. Are they much worm-eaten? O! if I had them to preſent to the Society of Antiquarians, I ſhou'd be enroll'd among the literati, and be reckon'd a great man! Dear Miſs, pray let me have them, I'll make you a preſent of all my birds, flowers, and ſhells, ſince you don't like antiques.

Emi. I wiſh it was in my power to oblige either your ladyſhip, or Mr. Belmont, but I really am not in poſſeſſion of manuſcripts in any of the learned languages.

L. Brid. But you underſtand them, miſs?

Emi. Madam!

L. Brid. Come, come, you are too modeſt, I am perfectly inform'd of your great erudition.

Emi. Upon my word, madam, I cannot ſay I am miſtreſs of any language, being but a very poor proficient

ficient in French and Italian, which are the only ones that I was ever taught.

L. Brid. [*aſide*] I am vaſtly diſguſted at her ignorance.—How cou'd your parents ſo ſhamefully neglect your education! But I preſume your mother gave up her time to the making of conſerves, and diſtilling of ſimples. Not underſtand Greek! 'tis an exalted language, and all its ideas are refin'd.

Bel. Now hang me, if I believe ſhe underſtands it herſelf. But ſhe is like the man in the play, "that "lov'd and honour'd the ſound." But, miſs, if you will give me the manuſcripts, I won't tell Lady Bridget, upon honour.

Emi. I do aſſure you, ſir—

Bel. You will for ever oblige me, miſs.—Egad, ſhe has the true Cleopatran neck, and the right Grecian Venus' noſe. [*Aſide.*

Enter a Servant.

Ser. [*To* Emily.] Madam, my lord deſires to ſpeak with you in his library, and, ſir, there is a gentleman to wait on you with ſome modern antiques.

Bel. Models of antiques, he muſt have ſaid, you blockhead!

Emi. I ſhall attend his lordſhip.

L. Brid. [*aſide*] In his library! Poor illiterate! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *A library.*

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. I know not how to act in this affair; if her father ſhou'd diſcover her being here, I have no right to detain her. This unknown lover too puzzles me much. Somerville is poſitive he came to her, and yet with what an air of truth and confidence ſhe has diſown'd him! I'll make her think that Somerville is gone; ſhe may, from that belief, become more candid.

Enter Emily.

Emi. I have expected your lordſhip's ſummons with the utmoſt impatience.—Have you ſeen Sir Charles?

L. Bel. Yes, Emily, but all my arguments were vain; he holds his purpoſe, and is this very moment on his journey.

Emi. And does this wretched body ſtill ſubſiſt, after the ſoul is fled!

L. Bel. This is the language of romance; you muſt forget him. I have matters of more conſequence to acquaint you with.

Emi. Why did you not ſuffer me to ſee Sir Charles? He muſt, he wou'd have credited the truth, and thought me what I am, injur'd, and innocent. But, at this inſtant, he deteſts my name, he thinks me falſe, and ſtrives to baniſh me from his remembrance.

L. Bel. Then do the ſame by him; retaliation is held juſt.

Emi. Never, my lord; he is deceiv'd, and my poor heart now bleeds for what his generous ſoul muſt feel, when he ſhall be convinced that he has wrong'd me.

L. Bel. That may poſſibly never happen; or, if it ſhou'd, the time muſt be far off, and we have not a moment now to loſe. I have received a letter from your father, which informs me he will be here this night, and that he comes in ſearch of you.

Emi. My father here! and will you give me up?

L. Bel. You know I have no power to with-hold you from him.

Emi. I am ſatisfied—all that can now befall me, is quite equal; ſince Somerville is loſt, no matter what becomes of me.

L. Bel. I ſhall be very unwilling to give you back into your father's power, as I fear he will compel you to that marriage you ſeem ſo much to loath.

Emi.

Emi. No, ſir, that cannot be: even at the altar, ſhou'd he drag me there, I will aſſert the rights of human kind;—not all the world combin'd, ſhall ever make me the wife of any other man but Somerville.

L. Bel. You never can be his; therefore, Emily, let me now adviſe you, if the gentleman, who was found in your cloſet, and has for ever ſeparated Somerville and you, be a man of honour, and one whoſe family and fortune may pretend to you, to turn your thoughts on him. I really know no other way to eſcape your father's wrath, and reſcue your own character.

Emi. Is cruelty ſo catching? Has Somerville infected your humanity, and taught you to inſult my wretchedneſs! Muſt I again repeat, I do not know him?

L. Bel. [*aſide*] Her emotion affects me, 'tis ſtrong and natural; ſhe has again convinc'd me.—Excuſe this little trial of your truth, which friendſhip, and not cruelty, ſuggeſted.

Emi. A wounded heart, my lord, ill brooks ſuſpicion.

L. Bel. Pray pardon mine, and be aſſur'd 'tis vaniſh'd now. Your father's arrival may throw ſome new light on this affair; the moment it is clear, I will ſend after Sir Charles, and poſſibly may bring him back. Endeavour to be chearful, and hope the beſt.

Emi. My hopes and chearfulneſs have fled with him.

L. Bel. They may return, even ſooner than you think. But let us join my ſiſters; their converſation will, at leaſt, amuſe you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. *Younger* Freeman's *lodgings.*

Enter Younger Freeman.

Y. Free. I am confoundedly fatigu'd; I begin to think, that a man of galantry has but a bad time of

it; 'tis the life of a ſeaman, weathering ſtorms and tempeſts, to gain a port, which one quits without reluctance, in three days. Well, now for the delights of matrimony! Egad, that's worſe; for there, we are weather-bound for life.—Aye, but a fine young woman of quality, with ten thouſand pounds.—Youth, beauty, and money, are but ſweetners, they will melt; however, I am reſolv'd to try how long they, and my love, will laſt; for any thing is better than returning to poſt the books, with old ſquare toes, that's certain.

Enter Elder Freeman.

E. Free. I am agreeably diſappointed at finding you in town, brother, as I did not expect you for ſome time; but it is lucky you are come, for my father's patience is almoſt worn out by your long abſence.

Y. Free. And ſo, Jack, you think, becauſe I am in London, that I ſhall quietly return into the city, and occupy my old ſeat in the compting-houſe? but faith you are miſtaken; buſineſs to attorneys and mechanics, for me; I fly at higher game; pleaſure, my dear, pleaſure is the buſineſs of my life, and the only buſineſs worth following, believe me.

E. Free. Theſe flights wou'd be ridiculous, even in a man of fortune, brother, but from you, they appear contemptible. You were bred to buſineſs, Harry, and a man who acts properly, in the ſtation of life he was born to, is a much more eſtimable character, than a coxcomb, aſſuming the airs of a man of quality, without breeding, or fortune to ſupport them. You really make a very abſurd figure

Y. Free. I ſhou'd upon 'Change, perhaps, as the mercantile world don't deal in my way. But come, Jack, ſhou'd I not, even there, be look'd upon as a genius, who, in leſs than ſix months, have acquir'd ten thouſand pounds, having ſet out in trade without one ſhilling of capital?

E. Free.

E. Free. As I cannot believe that you have either parts, or application, ſufficient to diſcover the longitude, I ſhall not reaſon on ſuch a ridiculous propoſition.

Y. Free. Why truly, brother, as you obſerve, I have never ſtudied mathematics, or the art of navigation, much, ſince I left ſchool; nor am I philoſopher enough, to have diſcover'd the tranſmutation of metals; and yet this poor contemptible, abſurd brother of yours, may be maſter of the aforeſaid ſum, with ſome other pretty moveables thereunto belonging, in a few hours, if he thinks them worth his acceptance [*aſide.*]—He muſt be deviliſh dull, if he does not gueſs now.

E. Free. I ſhou'd be extremely ſorry that ſo near a relation of mine had enroll'd the name of Freeman among the knights of the poſt.

Y. Free. Have a care, Jack, though you are my brother, my honour, ſir—

E. Free. Don't debaſe the term.—Honour's the offſpring of fair truth and honeſty; yet ſcoundrels, ſharpers, worſe than robbers, uſe it. Gambler is a name more infamous than highwayman, has all his vice, but wants his ſingle virtue, courage. With ſuch, I may preſume, you are aſſociated.

Y. Free. The violence of your temper, Mr. Freeman, has warped your underſtanding; there are other means, beſides play, to make a fortune, which, ſince your plodding wiſdom can't diſcover, I ſhall inform you of.—Suppoſe a lady of quality were to think my figure not quite ſo contemptible as you ſeem to do?

E. Free. Inſufferable vanity!

Y. Free. You may think ſo, if you pleaſe; but it is a certain fact, that there is a lady, of high birth and beauty, with the fortune I have named, that is ready to take hands, and begin a dance for life, with your humble ſervant, Harry Freeman.

E. Free. Then you have deceiv'd, impos'd on her, which is the loweſt baſeneſs.

Y. Free. Not I, as I hope to be ſaved; I had no occaſion to tell her I was a pretty fellow, "for ſhe "had eyes, and choſe me." And I never pretended to be any thing more; rot me, if I did.

E. Free. Am I from hence to ſuppoſe, that you have acquainted the lady with your family, and no fortune?

Y. Free. Pardonnez moi; there was not the leaſt neceſſity of informing her, that my father Anthony, and my brother John Freeman and co. formerly ſold rum and hops in Biſhopſgate-ſtreet, and were at preſent promoted to the more profitable, and, of courſe, more honourable employment, of keeping a bank in Lombard-ſtreet. Ha, ha, ha!

E. Free. Deſpicable coxcomb! I know not which you are the moſt proper object of, contempt or rage; can you be ſuch a wretch, to think of abuſing the love and confidence of a woman of virtue and honour, who perhaps has no other weakneſs, but her attachment to ſuch a worthleſs being; one who would cheat her into beggary, and ruin her merely to ſave himſelf. By heaven, if I can diſcover who ſhe is, I will detect your fraud.

Y. Free. Why faith, Jack, tho' you have put the affair in a bad light, you have come pretty near the truth, I own; tho', upon my ſoul, I love the lady.

E. Free. Anſwer me one queſtion.—Wou'd you marry her, were you in affluence, and ſhe a beggar?

Y. Free. Hum! that is ſtating the caſe quite au travers. Why I, I, I really can't tell. But I am ſo confoundedly dipt, Jack, I can't pay at ſight, as I us'd to do, at the Bank; and then I am ſo helliſhly afraid leſt my taylor, my milliner, and frizeur, ſhould carry in their bills to my father, that, faith, I can't help it; I muſt marry to quit ſcores.

E. Free. The difficulty of your ſituation ſhall not be an excuſe for ſuch villainy—if you act with honeſty, I'll ſerve you; inform the lady who you really

are; if ſhe perſiſts in her regard, I will acquaint my father, and have no doubt but he will make a ſuitable ſettlement—her fortune is by no means beyond his power to give an equivalent to.

Y. Free. Ay, Jack, but if ſhe ſhou'd fly off?

E. Free. Then, ſir, I'll pay your debts, provided you return to buſineſs, and renounce the coxcomb. In three days I ſhall expect your final anſwer, and from that date ſhall eſteem you as a brother, or diſclaim that tye. In the mean time, here is a bill to ſerve your preſent uſe.—No thanks, deſerve my friendſhip, and be ſure of it. [*Exit.*

Y. Free. Why, what a deviliſh deal of ſtuff has this formal elder brother of mine canted out, about honour and honeſty! Egad, I might as well have read a ſermon, as I us'd to do, on a Sunday evening, when I was apprentice. "Inform the lady who I am, give "her up, and return to buſineſs."——Ha, ha, ha! poor Jack! you know little of the world on this ſide Temple-Bar. Tho' I felt myſelf ſomewhat aukward, at ſome part of his diſcourſe, I thought he look'd like my father in a paſſion, and I actually began to be almoſt afraid of him.—I am glad he is gone, I have now three days of grace, which I am reſolved to make the moſt of, and the worſt that can happen, is, to cloſe my books at the end of them.

Enter Ralph; *and gives a letter.*

Ralph. From Lady Louiſa, ſir.

Y. Free. [*Reads and kiſſes it.*] Corn, wine, and oyl, Ceres, Flora, Bacchus, and all the gods and goddeſſes! fly, Ralph, get my things to dreſs: dear creature! at the garden door, at ſeven o'clock.

Ralph. Pleaſe your honour, the trunks are not yet arriv'd.

Y. Free. No matter, I'll viſit my charmer en diſhbille, en cavalier: love is above all forms, let that plead my excuſe. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE

SCENE V. *A drawing-room.*

Lord Belmont, *Lady* Bridget, *Lady* Mary, *Lady* Louiſa, *Mr.* Belmont, *and* Emily *are diſcover'd.*

L. Bel. So then, Lady Mary, it is your opinion that we can love but once?

L. Mar. I believe, my lord, the general experience of mankind will allow, that true love viſits us but once in our lives.

L. Loui. Lord, ſiſter, how you muſt be laugh'd at, ſhou'd you hint ſuch an old-faſhion'd notion among the Beau-monde.—Why there is ſcarce a man of quality, in England, who has not been violently in love with half a dozen fine women, at leaſt, before he thinks of marrying; and if every one of them were to carry off but a corner of his heart, there cou'd ſcarce be an atom left for the poor lady, to whom he devotes his hand.

Bel. I am ſure if that was true, I ſhou'd have no more heart than a mummy; for I have ſuffer'd love, many and many a time, and yet I think that I am heart-whole ſtill, and have as large a ſtock of love to diſpoſe of as ever.

Emi. You, very poſſibly, may have preſerv'd your whole fund entire, ſir; for it is my belief, "they "never knew to love, who knew to change." Other paſſions, ſometimes, aſſume its form, and impoſe even on ourſelves. But the true, the real flame, ſubſiſts even 'till the lamp of life itſelf is quite extinguiſh'd.

L. Loui. [*aſide*] She talks very feelingly upon this ſubject.

L. Brid. True, Miſs Lawſon; I will not bluſh to own that I am a fatal illuſtration of this ſentiment; the redundancy of my regards for Mr. Feeble, even in the tomb, ſhall ever make me decline marriage.—To his memory have I conſecrated my virgin bloom.

Bel.

Bel. Lord, ſiſter, I never heard that you were in love, 'till now, and have often wonder'd mightily, that you did not marry ſome learned man.

L. Brid. The delicacy of my ſentiments, brother, forbad a promulgation of my paſſion; tho' ſome years are elapſed, ſince the dear object was no more.

Bel. Ay, that there has, I'll be ſworn.—'Tis at leaſt five-and-twenty years, ſince poor Feeble departed, and he was dying for ſeven years before.—There's a fine antique, nephew; there's a true gem, my lord.

L. Bel. You will pardon me, ſir, this is but a very poor copy.

Bel. Don't ſay ſo, my lord, you'll break my heart; I gave fifty guineas for it, and beſpoke it three months ago.

L. Brid. Beſpoke an antique, brother?

Bel. Yes, madam, beſpoke it.

L. Bel. What then, he made it for you, ſir?

Bel. No, no, no, he ſaid it was the true original antinoüs, and it might be two thouſand years of age, for ought he knew.

L. Loui. And ſo it may, uncle, if you can preſerve it ſo long; and tho' it may not now, it will then certainly be an antique.

Bel. I'll go inſtantly, and find out the fellow that ſold it to me, and if he cannot prove my ring a thouſand years old, at leaſt, I'll give him a hundred ſtrokes with my ratan, and get my fifty guineas again. [*Exit.*

L. Mar. My poor uncle has generally ſome violent diſtreſs of his own making.

L. Loui. O this is nothing to the grief I ſaw him in laſt year, upon the blowing of a tulip, which he fancied would be black, and unfortunately proved to be red and yellow.

L. Bel. He, like many others, miſtakes a paſſion for ſcience, for the knowledge of it, and is, therefore, for ever liable to impoſition. But we have all our failings, and let his paſs. I think, Louiſa, you gave up your opinion too tamely, I was in hopes we ſhould have

have a notable argument; but your withdrawing, has left Miſs Lawſon, and your ſiſter, in poſſeſſion of the field.

L. Loui. I have not courage ſufficient, my lord, to encounter ſuch odds; even Lady Bridget joined them, that was three to one: but if your lordſhip will declare on my ſide, I am ready to renew the attack, and have no doubt of victory.

L. Bel. Come on then, ladies, all brave men ſhou'd engage on the weaker ſide.

L. Mar. If numbers can give ſtrength, my lord, I fancy there will be ten ready to liſt under Lady Louiſa's banner, for one that will chuſe to be encumber'd with the heavy armour of conſtancy, which our champions muſt put on. Come, General Lawſon, rouſe to the charge.

Emi. If our friends are fewer, madam, they will be more ſincere, and of courſe, like Britiſh ſoldiers, braver than thoſe venal troops, that are ready to fight under all colours.

L. Brid. Permit me, my lord, to bring this argument to a concluſion, by obſerving, that young ladies cannot expatiate on the theſis of love, without giving an intimation that they are adepts in the ſcience; which would be rather an oppribrium, than an honour to perſons not yet adult. But if your lordſhip pleaſes, you and I will ſupport the argument, in a Socratic manner; and treat the ſubject, as they would have done in the Athenian porch.

L. Bel. I muſt beg to be excus'd, madam. I am by no means maſter of the ſubject, and propos'd it merely to hear what might be ſaid on both ſides. Some other time I ſhall be glad to hear your ſentiments --at preſent, buſineſs calls me. [*Exit.*

L. Brid. At your option, my lord.

L. Loui. [*a ſide to L. Mary*] What ſhall I do to get away? I muſt feign myſelf ill.

L. Brid. Come, children, if you will attend me to my dreſſing-room, I may perhaps inform your underſtandings

ſtandings with a lecture on la belle paſſion, provided you do not preſume to reaſon, or interrupt me.

L. Loui. I am extremely ill on a ſudden.—Your ladyſhip will excuſe me.—Siſter, pray help me to my chamber.

Emi. Will your ladyſhip permit me to attend you?

L. Loui. By no means, madam, I'll only trouble my ſiſter.

L. Brid. Here, child, lean on me.—This is a precipitate attack. [*Exeunt all but Emily.*

Emi. Oh! what a heavy taſk? to wear a chearful face, with a ſad heart!—It will not long be ſo.—When in my father's power, I ſhall have leave, as well as cauſe, to weep. Yet let me ſnatch this precious interval, and give a looſe to thoſe fond ſighs, that rend my burſting boſom! cruel, unkind.—Ah, no! deceiv'd, unhappy Somerville.

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. O miſs, I am glad I have met you; the man ſwears it is a right cameo, a true antique. Lord, what's the matter, miſs! what do you cry for? has ſiſter Bridget ſaid any thing to vex you? I'll lay my life ſhe has, ſhe is very ſpiteful at times, tho' good-natur'd in the main, I'll aſſure you. But if I was you, I wou'd not cry for her.

Emi. You do her wrong, ſir; ſhe never gave me cauſe to weep.

Bel. Well, miſs, dry up your tears, I have ſomething to tell you, that will make you glad; at leaſt, I hope ſo.

Emi. That would be news, indeed.

Bel. Ay, ſo you'll ſay, when you hear it. But you muſt not mention it, miſs. (I don't know how to tell it to her neither.) [*Aſide.*

Emi. If it be a ſecret, ſir, you had better keep it ſtill ſo.

Bel. No, miſs, you muſt know it, and no body elſe; O yes, one more—can't you gueſs, now?

Emi.

Emi. No, really, ſir, I never was expert at riddles, even when my thoughts were free; now they are all employed. [*Going.*

Bel. Pray ſtay a little, miſs, I'll tell it you juſt now.

Emi. I ſhou'd be glad to be excus'd, at preſent, ſir; I am not very well.

Bel. That happens very croſs, now, and yet I am in a hurry too; I ſhall run away the very minute I have told you.—Did you ever ſee my birds? I have a parrot that ſpeaks as plain as I do.

Emi. [*aſide*] And as much to the purpoſe, I dare ſay.

Bel. What do you ſay, miſs?

Emi. Nothing that ſignifies.— [*aſide*] I ſhall be teized to death.

Bel. I'll teach that parrot, by to-morrow morning, to tell you that I love you, and will marry you.—I have done it. [*Runs off.*

Emi. My poor ridiculous uncle! yet I can't help ſmiling at his diſappointment, when he ſhall know his miſtreſs for his niece. [*Exit.*

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. Egad, ſhe ſmil'd tho'; that's a good ſign; I did not ſee her laugh before, ſince ſhe came into the houſe. I have ſeen as pretty women, that's certain, but never one that had ſuch true antique beauty. When ſhe is Mrs. Belmont, I ſhall have all the virtuoſi coming to admire her neck, and the ſtatuaries begging leave to take off her noſe; but I won't ſuffer it. No, ſir, Mrs. Belmont is indiſpos'd, ſhe can't be ſeen this morning; you muſt come ſome other time, for I ſhan't expoſe her to the eye of curioſity, as I do my coins. I'll keep one rarity to myſelf at leaſt. But I muſt take care that Lady Bridget don't come near her to infect her brain with dictionaries and romances.—I'll go directly, and take a houſe for her, near the Muſeum, and if I can but inſpire her with a true taſte for antiques, I ſhall poſitively be the happieſt man alive. [*Exit.*

End *of the* Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

A drawing-room.

Enter Lady Mary *and Lady* Louiſa.

L. Loui. I Begin to have a thouſand fears, ſiſter, perhaps his ſervant has loſt my letter; perhaps ſome accident has happen'd to Mr. Freeman, or he certainly wou'd not out-ſtay his time.

L. Mar. My dear Louiſa, your watch and your paſſions keep pace; it wants ſome minutes of ſeven; but I cou'd wiſh from my heart, that almoſt any accident might prevent this meeting. I find myſelf ſinking in my own eſteem, for being in the ſecret. I wiſh you had not told me.

L. Loui. How can you be ſo ill-natur'd! Don't you know it was impoſſible to keep it from you?

L. Mar. That is, indeed, the beſt, tho' not the kindeſt excuſe, you might have made, for ſuch a confidence. But prithee, Louiſa, how is this affair to end? You cannot ſurely be mad enough to think of marrying a perſon, that, for ought you know, may be a highwayman?

L. Loui. It is a great pity, Lady Mary, that your ſentiments are ſo vaſtly confin'd. But you have never felt la belle paſſion, and I excuſe you. You don't know, that from the inſtant we fall in love, we have a power of endowing the dear object of our affections, with truth, conſtancy, honour, in ſhort, with every amiable quality; nor do we ever ſuppoſe that he can be deficient, even in the common acquiſitions, either of wealth or rank.

L. Mar. I am ſurprized that the repeated diſappointments, which ſuch ſanguine expectations have met with, even in romance, have not a little abated your ladyſhip's ardor. — But here comes your hero, and I, for this once, will act the part of a truſty confidante,

fidante, by retiring, to prevent your being interrupted.

L. Loui. O! for heaven's ſake, take care of Miſs Lawſon, and Aunt Bridget.

L. Mary. I ſhall prevent their coming near you, by ſtaying in the next room. [*Exit.*

Enter Younger Freeman.

Y. Free. Your ladyſhip ſees the happieſt of mankind, this moment, before you, ſince I am again permitted to behold that beauteous form, and breathe my raptures forth on this fair hand.

L. Loui. You are vaſtly polite, ſir; but may I not ſuppoſe, that among the multiplicity of fine women you muſt have ſeen, during your abſence, you may have met with one, to whom that compliment might be more properly addreſs'd?

Y. Free. [*aſide*] Sure he can't have heard any thing.

L. Loui. You ſeem to pauſe for a reply, ſir.

Y. Free. Pauſe, madam—I pauſe indeed, with aſtoniſhment, at ſuch an uncommon inſtance of humility—But if your ladyſhip will caſt a look upon that mirror, it will fully anſwer your unjuſt ſuſpicion.

L. Loui. I can't avoid being pleas'd at my doubts, ſir, ſince they have afforded you an opportunity of clearing them ſo politely.

Y. Free. The tedious hours I have been compell'd to paſs in abſence, have been all employ'd in ſtupid buſineſs, looking over ſteward's accounts, and making leaſes, which wou'd have been quite inſupportable, but that I hop'd, at my return, your ladyſhip wou'd kindly condeſcend to abridge my tortures, and ſuffer me to ſeize that beauteous hand.

L. Loui. O, Mr. Freeman!

Y. Free. By heaven, I cannot live a day, an hour, unleſs you promiſe to be mine; lillies and roſes bloom to wait your coming—now, now, my charmer, name the happy hour. O how delightful is a true love match! Say, at what time my chariot ſhall attend.

L. Loui.

L. Loui. I am frighted at your tranſports, I cannot now reſolve.

Y. Free. Here let me wait then, on my bended knee, 'till you pronounce my doom.

L. Loui. Pray riſe, I——

Enter Lady Mary.

L. Mar. O Louiſa, my brother hearing that you were not well, has ſent word he is coming up to ſee you; that gentleman had better make his way down the back ſtairs: I will delay my lord, for a minute, in the next room, but pray, ſir, make haſte. [*Exit.*

Y. Free. And muſt I leave you undetermined? Will you not ſuffer me to ſee you again this night? May I not return the ſame way, ſome hours hence, when the family are retir'd to reſt, and there can be no interruption? O ſpeak, my angel!

L. Loui. I am ſo terrified, I know not what to ſay; but pray be gone, this moment, even tho' you ſhou'd return.

Y. Free. That permiſſion has given me new life, and now I fly. [*Exit.*

Enter Lord Belmont, *and Lady* Mary.

L. Bel. I am glad to hear ſhe is better.— Louiſa, what has been the matter? You tremble, and look pale.

L. Loui. My nerves are weak, my lord, you know that's a common complaint.

L. Bel. It is indeed become too general; but I flatter'd myſelf, that a good conſtitution, and regularity, might have exempted you from it, as I believe it uſually has its foundation in late hours, and want of exerciſe. But we ſhall go into the country, in a few days, to remedy theſe evils.

L. Mar. I rejoice to hear your lordſhip ſay ſo, for at this lovely ſeaſon of the year, I grow quite weary of London.

L. Loui. [*aſide*] I have the comfort to think I ſhall not be of the party.

L. Bel. Come, ladies, let us adjourn to the drawing-room, I left Lady Bridget and Miſs Lawſon there; company is good for you, Louiſa.

L. Mar. We attend your lordſhip. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A ſtreet.*

Enter Sir Charles Somerville.

Sir Char. Where can ſhe have fled, my dear, unhappy Emily? But wherefore do I call her mine? She ſurely muſt have eſcaped with her unknown gallant—I need not then defer my journey longer—I have bid adieu to happineſs, and her, and 'tis no matter where I wander now. [*Young* Freeman *enters as from the garden, croſſes the ſtage, and exit.*] Have I my ſight? or is it fancy conjures up this fiend! By heaven, that is the man—yet ſure I muſt miſtake. He came out of that door too, Lord Belmont's garden-door! What! has he rivall'd me in friendſhip as in love! this is too much; my honour is now at ſtake, Lord Belmont muſt account for this proceeding; for tho' impos'd upon by female artifice, I will not be man's dupe. [*Exit.*

SCENE III. *A library, Lord* Belmont *diſcover'd.*

Enter Sir Charles.

L. Bel. Welcome, my dear Charles: is your ſervant arriv'd? Have you diſcover'd who this ignis fatuus, this unknown ſpark is? You ſeem diſorder'd.

Sir Char. My lord, I come to you for information, I'll be no longer trifled with—you muſt explain.

L. Bel. [*aſide*] He has found out that Emily is here; who cou'd reveal it?—If then you know the ſecret, Charles, how can you blame me?

Sir Char. Not blame you, ſir! but I will yet have patience—ſuch mean, clandeſtine doings, are unworthy of your birth. You wrung my ſtory from me,

to

to betray me—think what a light I ſee you in, then let your crime upbraid you.

L. Bel. By heaven, I never did diſcloſe your confidence, nor——

Sir Char. For ſhame, for ſhame, my lord, wound not the character of manhood thus, nor ſink below my rage.

L. Bel. Sir Charles, this is a language I am not us'd to hear; but lovers, like lunatics, have leave to rail, when the mad fit is on them: I think her innocent, and will defend her.

Sir Char. You think her innocent! you! the abettor of her guilt; her lover's confidant!

L. Bel. I bluſh to own that I have been his friend; ill-temper'd, un-bred man.

Sir Char. I am not quite ſo placid as your lordſhip, I confeſs; you are the true French courtier, my travels are to come. Born and bred up a Briton, I may be rough, but am ſincere—no flatterer, no falſe friend.

L. Bel. I even diſdain to anſwer your low ſarcaſm, but am moſt glad that Emily has eſcap'd you.

Sir Char. I doubt it not, but will not waſte my time in fruitleſs altercation.

L. Bel. The ſooner this is ended, ſir, the better. At ſix to-morrow morning, if you pleaſe, we will uſe men's, not women's weapons.

Sir Char. Name the place.

L. Bel. Hyde-Park.

Sir Char. You may depend on me. But as that time or place will not admit of parley, I now conjure you to anſwer me one queſtion.

L. Bel. Speak it, ſir.

Sir Char. If I ſurvive, it will be of ſome conſequence, if not, it will be buried with me. Who is the happy man, that both my miſtreſs and my friend have ſacrificed me to?

L. Bel. Inſolent man! how ſhould I know the perſon?

Sir Char. In vain you ſtrive to hide him from me—were he ennobled with all the honours majeſty can

give, he can't be rais'd above reſentment; and were he ſprung from the loweſt of mankind, my Emily's love has dignified his meanneſs, and made him, in point of happineſs at leaſt, far my ſuperior. Therefore, again, I do intreat you tell me.

L. Bel. There is ſomething very extraordinary in your perſiſting in a requeſt, that is impoſſible for me to grant; for, by my honour, I do not know the man whom you ſuppoſe your miſtreſs has preferr'd, nor ever heard his name.

Sir Char. Not know the perſon, whom I this very hour ſaw come out of your houſe, by the back-door that leads into your garden?

L. Bel. You muſt miſtake, Sir Charles, it cannot be.

Sir Char. Do I know you, am I awake, or in my ſenſes? If theſe things are true, I ſurely ſaw him iſſue from your garden-door; his image is too ſtrongly fix'd upon my wounded memory, to think I can miſtake; the moon ſhone bright upon him.

L Bel. You have amaz'd me, yet ſtill I think it is impoſſible.

Sir Char. My dear Lord Belmont, if I have injur'd you, by imagining you to be this unknown perſon's friend, therefore no longer mine, what apology, what atonement can I make?

L. Bel. Indeed, Sir Charles, you have wrong'd both truth and friendſhip; I never had a friend I dared to injure, or diſclaim; yet, if it was not a viſion that you ſaw, you are in ſome degree excuſeable—yet, why ſhou'd he come here?

Sir Char. That is indeed a myſtery—but as I cou'd not imagine he came to any one within theſe walls, except your lordſhip, I hope you'll pardon the frenzy of a man who thought himſelf aggriev'd in the moſt tender points, his love and friendſhip.

L. Bel. Sir Charles, your ſeeming motives for reſentment were ſo ſtrong, that I can readily forget the effects—I hope we are friends again—but let the con-

conviction of your preſent error lead you to doubt, at leaſt, the certainty of ſome former appearances.

Sir Char. O, my too generous friend! let me be happy ſtill in your eſteem, but baniſh from my mind all thoughts of love. Her guilt is fully proved; ſhe fled, that fatal night, from Bath, with her ſeducer. Curſes blaſt him!

L. Bel. What reaſon have you to think ſo?—[*aſide*] 'Tis plain he does not know ſhe's here, nor can I now inform him.

Sir Char. My ſervant is return'd, and brings this ſad account; he left her poor unhappy father ſetting out in purſuit of—I cannot name her, my once lovely Emily.

L. Bel. In ſuch a ſcene of complicated diſtreſs, may ſhe not have fled for refuge to ſome friend? Why will you think the worſt?

Sir Char. O no, my lord, ſhe had no friend to fly to; for ſure he is the worſt of foes, as well as villains, that wou'd deſtroy her innocence. I doubt not but the wretch may abandon her to want and infamy.

L. Bel. I cannot think that ſhe is in his power. It is improbable that a well-educated maid ſhou'd take ſo raſh a ſtep, but on a certainty of marriage with the man ſhe lov'd.

Sir Char. I ſhou'd rejoice to think as you do; and were there but the ſlighteſt foundation for hope, wou'd gladly reſt upon it. But all my doubts are at an end; I am therefore determined to quit England, but not 'till I have found the man, who has robbed me of my peace, and Emily. I'll go this moment in purſuit of him.

L. Bel. I ſhall be glad if you'll return and ſup with me; we ſhall be quite alone—I ſhall be anxious to know what diſcoveries you make. I alſo will endeavour to find out who this ſame incognito can viſit here.

Sir Char. I ſhall with pleaſure attend your lordſhip, provided I don't treſpaſs on you—— We ſleepleſs wretches are ſometimes tempted to break in upon thoſe hours the happy give to reſt.

L. Bel. You will oblige, and not diſtreſs me: name your hour.

Sir Char. Eleven, if agreeable.

L. Bel. Quite ſo, 'till then adieu. [*Exit Sir* Charles.] If Sir Charles Somerville is to be credited, what muſt I think? Who cou'd that villain come to? For ſuch, by all accounts, he muſt be. Emily continued in the drawing-room from dinner 'till I left it. She ſcarce yet knows the way to her own chamber, much leſs that through the garden; and yet to her, and her alone, he muſt have come.

Enter a Servant.

Ser. A gentleman deſires to ſee your lordſhip.

L. Bel. Shew him in. [*Exit* Servant.

Enter Mr. Southerne.

South. It is ſo long ſince I have ſeen your lordſhip, I am not ſurpriz'd that you don't know me.—My name is Southerne.

L. Bel. I am very glad to ſee you, ſir.

South. You were but a child, my lord, when I left London, on the death of my firſt wife.

L. Bel. I am ſorry, ſir, not to have been better known to ſo near a relation. Pray how does my couſin Emily? I uſed to viſit her often, while ſhe was at ſchool.

South. She is very well, my lord, and that's my greateſt grief. If ſhe had died with her mother, ſhe wou'd have been happy, and ſo wou'd I.

L. Bel. You will pardon me, ſir, but that thought ſeems ſo very unnatural.

South. Not at all, not at all, my lord; ſhe has been a plague to me, ever ſince ſhe was born; and my preſent lady, Mrs. Southerne, always ſaid ſhe wou'd be ſo. And Mrs. Southerne, let me tell your lordſhip, is a parlous wiſe woman, and never was miſtaken in her whole life; at leaſt, I never thought her in the wrong, and therefore never contradicted her.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. I ſhould be ſorry to think Mrs. Southerne never err'd in judgment, for then my couſin muſt have verified this infallible lady's prediction.

South. And ſo ſhe has, my lord. I, like a careful father, as I was, and in regard to her poor mother's memory, provided a proper and convenient match for her; my neighbour Winterbottom, my lord, a man pretty near my own age, one that was fit to conduct and manage ſuch a raw, headſtrong chit, as ſhe; a diſcreet perſon, let me tell you; and a great favourite of Mrs. Southerne's.

L. Bel. You cou'd not ſurely think of marrying my couſin to a perſon as old as her father, ſir?

South. Why not, why not, my lord, ſhe made no objection to his years, but truly ſhe diſlik'd his family and perſon, becauſe he was not a fine ſmock-fac'd beau, and cou'd not trace his pedigree up to Adam, forſooth; a conceited undutiful minx as ſhe was.

L. Bel. I cannot blame my couſin's ſpirit, ſir; her birth, youth, and fortune, entitle her to a very different match; but were ſhe a beggar, ſir, ſhe had better ſerve, to earn her bread, than wed the man ſhe hates.

South. Very fine, my lord; but ſtay 'till you hear the end of that high ſpirit.

L. Bel. Whatever her conduct may have been, ſir, I fear yours towards her, has juſtified it.

South. No, no, I was too tender of her; when ſhe got into the pouts, and cry'd and roar'd, I promiſed not to force her to this marriage; but if ſhe wou'd be a dutiful child, and conſent to it, I wou'd take her with me to Bath; ſhe promis'd ſhe wou'd try to obey me, and, in an ill hour, to Bath I brought her.

L. Bel. And there, I ſuppoſe, ſhe married the firſt man that aſk'd her.

South. Worſe, much worſe than that: ſhe ſent a fine ſpark, a baronet, I think he was, to aſk her for his wife, tho' ſhe knew very well, that Mrs. Southerne

had paſs'd her word ſhe ſhou'd marry Winterbottom; and did ſhe think I wou'd make my lady a liar? No, no, I ſent him a packing, and order'd madam to prepare for Southerne-hall directly.

L. Bel. May I not preſume to ſay, ſir, that this proceeding was too violent?

South. Pray don't interrupt me, my lord, and you ſhall hear how this gentle lady behaved.——About eleven that night, when I was ſmoking my pipe, I heard her ſquall; I ran into her chamber, and there I found the knight, and another of her lovers, I ſuppoſe, tilting at each other; I beat down their paſſes with my crutch, the candle fell to the ground, and before the ſervants could bring light, madam and all were fled.

L. Bel. Have you heard nothing of her ſince?

South. Not a ſyllable, nor wou'd I ever have enquired about her, but that my lady's honour is engaged to Winterbottom. Now, if you can aſſiſt me to diſcover where ſhe is, I'll bring a replevin for her, and carry her home directly. If Winterbottom will marry her, ſo—if not, I'll keep her cloſe enough to prevent her bringing any farther diſgrace on me, while I live, I warrant you.

L. Bel. Have you found out who the gentleman was, who fought with the baronet?

South. Yes, her maid Sally, a forward young flirt, like her miſtreſs, told the ſervants that his name was Freeman.

L. Bel. [*aſide*] Freeman! that's ſomething gain'd —a thought occurs.

South. Now I beg, my lord, that you will ſend out immediately to all the inns and lodging-houſes about town, to look for Emily; my ſervants ſhall go one way, yours another, and I think we can't well miſs of her; though London is hugely grown, ſince I was here, that's certain.

L. Bel. You may be ſure, ſir, that I ſhall take every proper method for the ſervice of my couſin; but it is

not

not by a replevin, that her character is to be recovered, though her perſon may. You, as her father, ſir, are firſt bound to do her juſtice; to call the man who has wrong'd her to a ſtrict account, and make him clear her fame by inſtant marriage.

South. What! I call any one to account! I fight for her! Not I, truly. I am a civil magiſtrate, the law is my weapon, and if I can reclaim her by that, I will.

L. Bel. But what are we to do, ſir, with the fair fugitive, when we have recovered her?

South. Even what your lordſhip pleaſes; you ſhall be heartily welcome to diſpoſe of her to whom you will for me. Try if you can make a match for her, ſuited to her birth and youth, ſince you don't approve of that I had propoſed. But not a penny will I give to buy her a fop, or a coxcomb, or a title; yet if either of thoſe fellows ſhe went off with, will marry her without money, why I'll e'en give my conſent, that I may be no longer plagu'd with her; tho' I am very much afraid that Mrs. Southerne will be angry

L. Bel. You talk, ſir, as if your daughter were already found.

South. Why, my lord, if ſhe ſhou'd never be found, I can't help it: but as I am come ſo far, I'll e'en ſtay in town 'till the horſes are reſted.—Poor things! they have not had ſuch a journey this many a long year.

L. Bel. Sir, if you will leave the management of this affair to me, I'll act as if my couſin were my ſiſter; but remember, ſir, you have promis'd your conſent to the baronet, if he ſhou'd again ſolicit it.

South. Ay, ay, my lord, he ſhall have her, if he chuſes to wait for her fortune 'till my death. I muſt now go ſmoke my pipe. In the morning I will call upon you, and pay my reſpects to Lady Bridget and my brother Belmont.

L. Bel. I wiſh you a good night, ſir.

South.

South. I believe I ſhall ſleep pretty ſound, for I am very weary. [*Exit.*

L. Bel. And I no leſs of you;—was there ever ſuch a brute!—But this Freeman, now we have found his name, he muſt have more cunning than a fox, if two ſuch briſk hunters, as Sir Charles and I, cannot unearth him. I will firſt try the ground at home, and that immediately. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. *A drawing-room.*

Enter Lady Mary *and Lady* Louiſa.

L. Loui. Was there ever ſuch a lucky eſcape, Lady Mary?

L. Mary. I know not how to conſider it in that light, Louiſa, I am almoſt ſorry that I prevented my brother's meeting Mr. Freeman, it muſt have brought on an eclairciſſement, which I am of opinion is abſolutely neceſſary.

L. Loui. You are not in earneſt, ſure! you cou'd not be guilty of any thing ſo inhuman!

L. Mary. I think it wou'd have been rather kind than cruel.

L. Loui. O, abſolutely barbarous! [*aſide*] I fancy ſhe is vex'd at not having a lover herſelf; I'll not truſt her any farther.

L. Mary. Our ſentiments are ſo different, upon many ſubjects, that I am not ſurpriz'd they do not accord on this. What objection can Mr. Freeman have to Lord Belmont's being made acquainted with his paſſion? My brother's tenderneſs demands our confidence, and it is robbing him of what he has fairly purchas'd, to with-hold it.

L. Mary. How often muſt I tell you, Lady Mary, that it is I, and not Mr. Freeman, that wou'd have this affair kept ſecret.—There is ſomething ſo indelicate in public courtſhip and weddings, that I cannot bear the thought.

L. Mar.

L. Mar. You'll pardon me, Louiſa, if I pronounce it much more indelicate for a young lady to receive the addreſſes of a lover privately, than if authorized by the approbation of her friends: in this caſe, her compliance might appear a condeſcenſion to their deſires; in the other, it looks too much like granting an indulgence to her own.

L. Loui. Your ladyſhip has ſtated the caſe, as you call it, with all the wiſdom and gravity of a lawyer. I hope you will be married to a judge, ſiſter; you'll be a vaſt help to him in his buſineſs, and may ſave him the expence of a clerk. But pray, Madam Coke upon Littleton, in the aforeſaid caſe, is not the young lady to be conſidered as the principal party, and is it not quite as neceſſary ſhe ſhou'd be pleas'd, as any of her kindred and parentage?

L. Mary. Doubtleſs, my dear; but will the approbation of her friends prevent her liking?

L. Loui. Why, yes, I think it might.—For example, were my uncle to recommend a huſband to me, he muſt be a virtuoſo; if my aunt, he muſt be a pedant; if my brother, he muſt be a philoſopher; and if my dear Maria was to chuſe for me, he muſt poſſeſs every great and amiable quality, have a large fortune and a title. Now, as I am not vain enough to hope for the laſt, and have a mortal averſion to all the other characters, I will e'en chuſe for myſelf, and then I ſhall have no body to complain of.

L. Mary. Nor to—remember that, Louiſa.

L. Loui. I hope I ſhall have no cauſe, but if I ſhou'd, I deteſt compaſſion of all things; I ſhou'd not like even to have your pity.

L. Mary. I am ſorry for it, becauſe I'm afraid you'll want it.

L. Loui. Pſha!

Enter Emily, *follow'd by Mr.* Belmont.

Emil. Indeed, ſir, you do me too much honour, and I wiſh it was in my power to make a ſuitable return.

Bel.

Bel. Pray ſpeak ſoftly, miſs, don't you ſee my nieces?—It was only a little preſent I was offering to Miſs Lawſon. You know my parrot, Louiſa?

L. Loui. Which of them, ſir?

Bel. The handſomeſt, to be ſure, niece; do preſs her to accept of it.

L. Loui. Miſs Lawſon, my uncle requeſts that you will not refuſe ſuch a trifle, as he offers; it is a thing of no ſort of value, indeed, I think of neither uſe, nor ornament.

Bel. Not ſo deſpicable, neither, madam.

L. Mar. However highly you may rate it, ſir, there is a degree of politeneſs in leſſening the value of what we beſtow.

Bel. Circumſtances vary caſes, niece; there are ſome things we ſhould not depreciate.

Emi. I rate the gift ſo far above my worth, ſir, that nothing ſhall ever tempt me to accept of it.

L. Loui. Bleſs me, Miſs Lawſon, you are the very paragon of humility; tho' I confeſs I think you are right not to be teized with ſuch a diſagreeable animal; a thing, that by pretending to imitate human ſpeech, puts one out of humour with the ſound of our own voice, as much as a monkey does with our ſpecies; I hate parrots, and monkeys,

Bel. Yes, but you love fops, and coxcombs, don't you? Let me tell you, madam, your tongue runs before your wit, you don't know what you are abuſing.

L. Loui. I ſhou'd be ſorry to find fault with any thing you lik'd, ſir, but I thought it was merely as a naturaliſt, that you kept ſuch a number of parrots; I did not think it was for the pleaſure of hearing them talk

Bel. I can tell you, madam, I wou'd rather hear them chatter, than you.

L. Mar. Yet they ſometimes caſt reflections, mal a propos, as well as my ſiſter, ſir.

Bel. Pray, ladies, let me draw breath.—Was there ever ſuch a couple of vixens!—(*aſide to Emily*) Don't

mind them, miſs, but conſider what I have ſaid; I am ſure it is intirely for your good I ſpeak. You don't know what a vaſt collection of pretty things I have, and they ſhall all be yours.

Emi. Where things are in themſelves indifferent, ſir, perſuaſions and temptations may avail; but where our reſolutions are founded in reaſon, nothing can or ſhou'd alter them.

Bel. Huſh, huſh, miſs, not a word more upon this ſubject, I have a great deal of buſineſs upon my hands; but pray, miſs, do think about it. I'll get you a very fine noeſgay to-morrow, I'll pull my paul diack tulip for you; the root coſt me twenty pounds, but you ſhall have it. Sure you won't be cruel to me now! Don't ſay one word, for I muſt run, and you ſhall have the tulip at any rate. [*Exit.*

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Your ſervant, ladies, was not that Mr. Belmont that left you? I ſuppoſe he has been entertaining you with ſome of his curioſities?

L. Loui. I think he is himſelf a greater curioſity, than any in his collection, my lord, but I fancy he has a mind to diſpoſe of them all together, and means to give a bargain of them to Miſs Lawſon.

Emi. He has done me the honour to offer me abundance of rarities, madam, but I am not diſpoſed to receive favours that I cannot return; therefore his treaſures are all ſafe for me

L. Mor. I fancy he loads his gifts with hard conditions, and would perſuade you to accept himſelf along with them. Is it not ſo, Miſs Lawſon?

L. Bel. I congratulate you on your conqueſt, Emily; your eyes can do wonders, it ſeems, and light up ſparks in dying embers.

Emi. I rather think, my lord, that Mr. Belmont's flame is of that kind, which dying fires emit, to ſhew their near extinction; and the faint blaze has, but by accident,

accident, caſt it's pale light on me; any other object might have been brighten'd by the ſame glimmer.

L. Bel. You wrong my uncle's taſte; I have not heard of his propoſing to marry any lady theſe five years. Before that time, he uſed to be generally in love twice a year, and had his ſummer and winter paſſions, which he conſtantly chang'd with his cloaths for the ſeaſon.

L. Mar. I am ſurpriz'd, my lord, that among ſuch a variety of miſtreſſes, he never found one that wou'd marry him; his perſon muſt have been tolerable, when he was young; his family and fortune unexceptionable.

L. Bel. Be aſſur'd, ſiſter, that was not the caſe; but by the time he had brought the lady to think favourably of him, he began to diſcover ſome imperfection in her. Perhaps her noſe was a hair's breadth longer or ſhorter than it ſhou'd be, according to the exact rules of proportion; a foot, or a finger, perhaps, diſguſted him; on which, he immediately quitted his purſuit, and went in ſearch of another model.

L. Loui. It is happy the men are not ſo nice, now-a-days, or we ſhou'd never be able to fix a lover.

L. Bel. I fancy, Louiſa, that muſt be at all times a difficult matter to accompliſh; a fine woman will, doubtleſs, captivate many, but there is ſomething more than beauty, neceſſary to preſerve her conqueſt over one.

L. Loui. Why, ſo they ſay, my lord; but I proteſt I can't credit it. It is impoſſible, I think, for a woman to loſe her power, while ſhe retains her beauty.

L. Mar. A moment's recollection muſt furniſh you with ſuch a number of inſtances to contradict your aſſertion, Louiſa, that I'm afraid the argument will drop, on your conviction; and I ſhou'd like vaſtly to have it carried on.

L. Loui. O! never fear, we'll keep it up; but I won't admit of odds; 'tis only with my brother I argue.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. Well then, I grant, that while beauty laſts, it will always have admirers. But theſe, Louiſa, are but pageants to a conqueror; the triumph muſt be found at home, in the heartfelt love and eſteem of a man of ſenſe and honour.

L. Loui. True, my lord, but that ſame beauty, that cauſes admiration and attention in other men, will neceſſarily preſerve our huſband's love.

L. Bel. By no means, Louiſa; poſſeſſion damps the ardor of deſire; merit alone can keep the flame alive, and hinder every wanton gale from blowing it abroad; that, like the veſtal fire, muſt be preſerv'd by conſtant watching.

L. Loui. By your account, my lord, a married woman has juſt as bad a life as a veſtal, if her whole time is to be ſpent in keeping one ſpark alive.

L. Bel. I will allow her taſk is full as arduous, tho' more pleaſing. Men are naturally inconſtant; and a huſband may ſometimes ſee a woman fairer than his wife; but 'tis her fault, if in the whole circle, he can find one that ſo well deſerves his love; whoſe temper, manners, conduct, and behaviour, are ſo much ſuited to his ſentiments; who knows no wiſh or will, but to pleaſe him—theſe charms, the homelieſt woman may acquire; without them, the faireſt form that ever ſtruck our eyes, cannot retain one heart.

L. Mar. Indeed, my lord, we are vaſtly obliged to you for this excellent leſſon; and ought to think ourſelves extremely happy in ſuch a ſenſible and kind inſtructor.

L. Bel. You make me ſo, as I hope that theſe ſlight hints I have thrown out, may be of uſe to you. But why ſo grave, Miſs Lawſon? I hope I have not made you melancholy.

Emi. I have heard your lordſhip, with the utmoſt pleaſure, and moſt ſincerely wiſh, that my whole ſex had done ſo too.

L. Loui. I think tho', we ought not to wiſh that the other ſex had heard his lordſhip; it wou'd make ſome of them horridly inſolent.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. Be aſſur'd, Louiſa, that I have only ſpoke the general opinion of every rational man. But a truce with the ſubject; for I flatter myſelf, you have no need of any other monitor, but your own ſenſe and virtue. Pray, Miſs Lawſon, do you know a Mr. Freeman?

Emi. No, my lord.

L. Bel. She ſeems not at all embarraſs'd. [*Aſide.*

L Loui [*aſide to Lady* Mary] What can he mean?

L. Bel. Is he of your acquaintance, Lady Mary? Or of yours, Louiſa?

L. Mar. I am not at all acquainted with him, my lord.

L. Loui. One knows ſuch a number of people, by meeting them in public, that it is impoſſible to remember names; we might, perhaps, have met ſuch a perſon at Soho, or at Almack's. Siſter, ſhall we go ſee my aunt? I think ſome one ſaid ſhe was not well. —Will you come, Miſs Lawſon?

Emi. I'll wait on your ladyſhip. [*Exeunt Lady* Mary *and Lady* Louiſa.

L. Bel. Stop a moment, Emily, I have but juſt time to tell you, that your father is arriv'd, and I have ſeen him.

Emi. Is he in health, my lord? I greatly fear this haſty journey may have injur'd him; that wou'd compleat my wretchedneſs.

L. Bel. Quiet your fears, he is in perfect health, and has promis'd to give his conſent to your marrying Sir Charles Somerville; or, in ſhort, whomever elſe you pleaſe.

Emi. How happy wou'd this kindneſs once have made me! now 'tis an aggravation of my ſorrow, and comes like a reprieve, when execution's paſt. Yet ſtill I thank my father; he will not preſs me then to the deteſted match he once propos'd. O let me fly to him, my lord, and on theſe trembling knees receive his bleſſing.

L. Bel.

L. Bel. You muſt not think of ſeeing him this night; to-morrow he'll be here, that's time enough. I flatter myſelf, that a very little time will ſerve to clear this myſtery.

Emi. O grant it heaven! let my poor heart be eas'd of this ſad load, which even imputed guilt can cauſe, and conſcious innocence but ill ſuſtain; then let me yield that heart to undivided, and unceaſing ſorrow, for my loſt Somerville.

L. Bel. Dry up your tears, he may not yet be loſt. I now intreat you will, for a little time, be guided by me; I wou'd not have you ſuffer my ſiſters to perceive any change in your looks, tho' I hope there will ſoon be a material one in your ſituation.

Emi. I ſhall endeavour to obey your lordſhip. [*Exit.*

L. Bel. What am I now to think? that Emily's innocent, I muſt believe; I took her on a ſudden, unprepar'd, and yet ſhe anſwer'd with ſuch calm indifference as common queſtions uſually produce. I'll keep a watchful eye upon Louiſa; ſhe was not calm, nor did ſhe anſwer fairly to the queſtion. — I fear the ſtain comes nearer than I thought; and yet I cannot think ſo meanly of my conduct towards her, as to ſuppoſe ſhe fears me; why then ſhou'd ſhe conceal the moſt important action of her life from her ſincereſt friend?

But men and women both have their caprice,
We deal too hardly, when we call it vice. [*Exit.*

END *of the* THIRD ACT.

ACT. IV. SCENE I.

Young Freeman's *lodgings; he is discover'd on a couch, with a book in his hand.*

Y. Free. "IS she not more than painting can express,
"Or youthful poets fancy when they love?" [*Looks at his watch.*
'Tis now near ten; at eleven, I'll make another glorious effort to carry off the prize. Her last words were, "Pray be gone, this instant, tho' you shou'd "return." — Dear creature! and shall I not accept thy gentle invitation? I'll quarter her arms on my chariot, as if she were an heiress. Lord, how it will fret the sober family in Lombard-street, who have only a cypher on their coach. [*Rings a bell.*

Enter Ralph.

Are my cloaths come?

Ralph. Yes, please your honour.

Y. Free. Get out my white and silver, prepare every thing to dress, and step to the next coach-maker; I want a chariot and six flying horses, to be got ready in half an hour: tell the fellow, I shall deal with him for an elegant equipage, in a few days. [*Exit* Ralph.

Enter Elder Freeman.

[*Aside.*] What brings him here? He is worse than the devil, and comes before the termination of his contract.

E. Free. Well, brother, have you seen the lady?

Y. Free. Why, Jack, I thought you men of business were more exact? Do you think I can't hold it 'till Monday, that you call upon me before the three days are out? This wou'd be enough to hurt a man's credit in the city; and why it shou'd not be deem'd a mark of insolvency, at this end of the town, I can't conceive.

E. Free. As you seem to think a citizen has no ideas but what relate to trade, I shall, upon your own premises, explain my visit. When we have but a slight opinion

opinion of our debtor, and find him tardy, we think it neceſſary to obſerve his motions: but where a man of honour is concerned, tho' we may doubt his power, we don't ſuſpect his principles, and therefore never watch his motions.

Y. Free. Which is, in plain Engliſh, to ſay, you look upon me as a ſcoundrel.—Votre ſerviteur, tres humble.

E. Free. You have drawn this ſarcaſm upon yourſelf, by preſuming too haſtily to explain my motives for this viſit; the irkſomneſs of which gives but a bad idea of your integrity. Thoſe who act fairly, need not fear inſpection.

Y. Free. Indeed, brother, you ſeem to me quite on the *qui vive*, always in a diſpoſition to quarrel, which is a mighty improper temper of mind to viſit a lover in, who ſhou'd be all tun'd to harmony and joy.

E. Free. The mind ſhou'd be at peace within itſelf, to feel thoſe charming ſenſations; they muſt ariſe from conſcious worth—not even the power of beauty can awake them, in mean, diſhoneſt hearts; I therefore ſhou'd rejoice, that you were capable of feeling their happy influence.

Y. Free. Ay, now you talk ſomething like a brother, and in return for your good nature, I will acquaint you, that I am this moment preparing to viſit my charmer.

E. Free. Surely you have been much to blame, to delay ſo long; this is not a proper time of night, to wait upon a woman of faſhion.

Y. Free. Not for a tradeſmen, I grant you, but we pretty fellows are welcome at all hours.

E. Free. Prithee, Harry, lay by the coxcomb, and tho' you don't act, ſpeak at leaſt, like a rational creature; what cou'd prevent your viſiting the lady, all this evening; upon the plan I propos'd, and you agreed to?

Y. Free. Why, really, Jack, you are ſo very impetuous, you won't give a man time to anſwer your

why's, and your wherefores; but if it will ſatisfy you, I did wait on the lady, this very evening; and am, by her appointment, to ſee her again this night. I then hope to prevail on her to ſtep into an hired equipage with me, and for the reſt of my life, to drive in my own.

E. Free. I don't underſtand you, ſure; is ſhe ſo romantically ſmitten, that ſhe can't wait a few days, 'till her friends and yours have adjuſted matters for her honour and ſecurity? There can be no doubt, that my father will gladly receive her as his daughter, and make a proper ſettlement, ſince ſhe is inclin'd to honour us with her alliance.—She cannot have had time to conſult her friends.

Y. Free. No, truly, nor ever ſhall, with my conſent. Why, Jack, it is impoſſible you ſhou'd be ſo ignorant as you ſeem; you'll never be a rich man, that's certain. There are coups de maitres in trade, as well as love; and if a man has not courage to make a puſh, he will never make a fortune.—Conſult her friends, ha, ha, ha!

E. Free. I thought, ſir, when we parted, you had determined to act like an honeſt man, and deal upon the ſquare?

Y. Free. Why, faith, Jack, you over-awed me then; but being at preſent a little more aſſur'd of ſucceſs, I laugh at your qualms, becauſe I am ſure that, by and by, you will laugh with me; and I ſhou'd deſerve to be eternally laugh'd at, if I were to be preach'd out of ſuch an opportunity of making my fortune; and ſo, my dear moral merchant, your moſt obedient; for I have ſcarce time to dreſs. [*Exit.*

E. Free. Incorrigible wretch! were I acquainted with the lady's name, I wou'd this moment alarm her family, and prevent her ruin. (*looks at his watch*) It is now near the time I am to meet Lord Belmont, upon buſineſs at his houſe; I cannot break my word; but that finiſhed, I will return, and watch every motion of this worthleſs brother, whom, if I can, (in ſpite of all the ties of blood) I will detect. [*Exit.*

Enter

Enter Younger Freeman *and* Ralph.

Y. Free. What's to be done? A plague on that ſtupid, money-making brother.

Ralph. Upon my word, ſir, I don't know what you'll do; they ſay it is too late to get ſix horſes for a journey, or even a fine chariot, to night.

Y. Free. Why did not you go ſooner?

Ralph. Becauſe you ordered me to get your things to dreſs.

Y. Free. 'Tis my own fault; why did I waſte my time with that dull fellow? But run, fly, try at the inns, get me even a poſt-chaiſe. Do any thing to make diſpatch. [*Exit* Ralph.
I cou'd hang myſelf for being ſuch a negligent block-head, to defer a thing of ſo much conſequence, 'till the laſt moment; if I ſhou'd loſe this night, 'tis ten to one but my evil genius, Jack, may take it into his head to deſcribe me as a fortune-hunter, in to-morrow's news-papers, and put Louiſa on her guard againſt me.

Enter Ralph.

Have you ſucceeded? Have you got the chaiſe?

Ralph. No, ſir, but I have done much better. As your brother went out, I heard him ſay he had buſineſs with Lord Belmont, and order his chariot there.

Y. Free. Buſineſs there! and at this late hour!—no matter—he cannot gueſs my ſcheme.—He has ſome plodding accounts to ſettle in a hurry, perhaps, with his methodical lordſhip, which may be of uſe in detaining him from any chance of diſcovering what is going forward.

Ralph. True, ſir; now what I propoſe is this; I'll wait on your honour there, and take James with me, and decoy your brother's ſervants to the ale-houſe—treat them with plenty of liquor, while James drives the chariot round the houſe to the garden-door, and waits ready to whip away, when your honour and the lady come to him.

Y. Free. Bravo, Ralph.—Fortune ſeems inclined to befriend me, and my brother ſhall, at laſt, be a means of my ſucceſs, in ſpite of his mechanical morality.—Follow me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Lord* Belmont's *library.* *Lord* Belmont *at a table, with papers before him.*

L. Bel. I am now ready for my banker. What a pleaſure there is in regularity! Yet many men, rather than take the trouble of ſettling their accounts, ſuffer their fortunes to moulder thro' their hands, without enjoyment, and ſcarce find themſelves in poſſeſſion of an eſtate before they feel the loſs of it. I have a noble ſurplus now for exigencies; I mean thoſe of others, more than my own. For the man, whoſe œconomy is properly regulated, ſeldom feels the force of that ſharp word; and I would treaſure up my wealth in acts of liberality.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Mr. Southerne is come again to wait upon your lordſhip.

L. Bel. Deſire him to walk in. [*Exit* Servant. What can provoke him to return at this hour? I hoped he wou'd have allowed both himſelf and me to reſt this night.

Enter Mr. Southerne.

South. Finding myſelf comfortably refreſhed after my pipe and tankard, my lord, and John having informed me that the horſes are in good heart, and able to ſet out to-morrow; I thought it was as good to pay my reſpects to my brother and ſiſter Belmont, to night, as to loſe another day in compliments. Therefore, if you pleaſe, I'll wait on them directly, and take my leave.

L. Bel. It ſhall be as you pleaſe, ſir; but I am ſurprized how you can think of leaving town, 'till you have found your daughter.

South. Why, look'e, my lord, I am an old man, and have no time to loſe from the comforts of life. It is uncertain whether ever Emily may be found; and I want to get home to my own dear, who will nouriſh and cheriſh me. However, if you think there is any chance of finding my daughter, I don't much care if I ſtay one day longer.

L. Bel. That is all I aſk, ſir.

South. Well then, my lord, I will bide at your requeſt, and the horſes will be the better for it. And ſince I don't go out of town in the morning, if it is agreeable, I'll ſtay and ſup with your lordſhip.

L. Bel. I am ſorry, ſir, I happen to be engaged, but am certain that Lady Bridget, and Mr. Belmont, will be glad of your company. I will acquaint them you are here, and return immediately to conduct you to them. [*aſide*] I muſt take care that Emily be not ſeen. [*Exit.*

South. What a deal of fuſs and ceremony is here? Cou'd not he let me go with him? But as he has no wife, may be he is gone to order ſomething for ſupper, as I uſed to do, when I was a widower. Ah! I wiſh I had continued ſo ſtill, and then I need not be afraid of any body! My nephew is a wiſe man, that's certain.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. I am ready now, ſir, to attend you; but muſt entreat you will not mention Emily's misfortune to my aunt or ſiſters.

South. Come then, my lord; and ſince you deſire it, I will not. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *A drawing-room.*

Enter Lady Bridget, *Lady* Mary, *and Lady* Louiſa.

L. Brid. I am doubtful whether I ſhall recollect Mr. Southerne; it is a good many years ſince I have ſeen him; and I was, at that æra, extremely young; in my infantine ſtate, as I may ſay.

Enter Lord Belmont, *and Mr.* Southerne.

South. Your ſervant, ſiſter; you look purely, faith; not a whit alter'd: my poor firſt wife was a great deal younger than you, and yet ſhe is gone: but we muſt all go, one time or other, they ſay.

L. Bel. My ſiſters, ſir.— [*Preſents Lady* Mary *and Lady* Louiſa.

South. Good pretty girls, my nieces are; the ſhorteſt of them is ſomething like my wife, when ſhe was her age; do you remember your aunt, young lady?

L. Loui. No, ſir; I don't believe I ever ſaw her.

South. Perhaps not.—Well, Siſter Biddy, and are you jolly, old girl? You thrive rarely.

L. Brid. Your phraſe is ſomewhat of the coarſeſt, Mr. Southerne.

South. Why, yes, we all grow coarſe, as we grow old, to be ſure. I do remember when you were almoſt as ſlender as that young miſs there. But where's my brother Belmont, the philoſopher, as we us'd to call him? Is he poking after cockle-ſhells, and old bits of copper, ſtill, my lord?

L. Bel. My uncle, ſir, is true to his former taſte—but I ſuppoſe they have not acquainted him with your being here; I'll ſend to let him know it. You'll be ſo good as to excuſe me, ſir, as I am engag'd. Ladies, good night; I leave Mr. Southerne in your charge; pray take care of him. [*Exit.*

L. Loui. [*aſide*] He ſups abroad; that's lucky.

L. Mar. What do you ſay, ſiſter?

L. Loui. Not material.

L. Mar. Pray, ſir, have not you a daughter by my aunt? A very accompliſh'd young lady, I have heard my brother ſay.

South. Yes, yes, madam, I have a daughter; and ſhe ought to be accompliſh'd, as you call it: ſhe has coſt me many a fair pound; ſhe was no leſs than ten years at a boarding-ſchool.

L. Loui. Was not that rather too long, ſir, to let a young lady remain out of her father's houſe? She muſt have been a perfect ſtranger to you.

South. Why, truly, madam, ſo ſhe was; but Mrs. Southerne ſaid it was for her good; and one muſt give up a great deal for the ſake of one's children, you know.

L. Brid. I am ſurpriz'd, Mr. Southerne, you did not think proper to preſent Miſs Southerne's duty to me, nor her reſpects to theſe young ladies her couſins; in this you have certainly been deficient, ſir.

South. Why, really, ſiſter, as neither you or they ever ſet eyes on her; I can't ſay I thought it of any great conſequence.

L. Brid. Notwithſtanding our mutual misfortune in that caſe, ſir, proper decorum ſhou'd be obſerved. But I ſhall not on this occaſion enter into any *conteſt of ſarcaſm*, or *reciprocation of ſmartneſs*.

Enter Mr. Belmont.

Bel. Brother Southerne, I am very glad to ſee you; how does my niece, and your wife, and all your children? Egad, you are a fine old Grecian, and wou'd make a very curious buſt; it might paſs for an antique; will you ſit to Ryſbrack for me?

South. As to the latter part of your diſcourſe, Brother Belmont, I don't thoroughly underſtand it; but as to my wife and children, they are very well; and I am glad to ſee you ſo.

Bel. Pray, Lady Mary, where is Miſs Lawſon?

L. Mary. In her chamber, ſir; I have not ſeen her ſome time.

Bel. Ay, ay, I gueſſed it; ſome of ye have vexed her. I found her crying to-day, ready to break her heart. I ſuppoſe this is your doings, Lady Bridget?

L. Brid. Certainly my poor brother is ſeized with a delirium, to ſuppoſe it poſſible for me to tranſgreſs the laws of urbanity and hoſpitality in any inſtance.

L. Loui. Surely, ſir, you muſt miſtake.

Bel.

Bel. No, madam, I do not miſtake, I am in my ſenſes; tho' ſo many teizing contradicting women are enough to put a man beſide himſelf.

L. Mar. Pray, Brother Belmont, who may this ſame lady be? I don't remember any of your family of that name.

L. Brid. She is no way allied to us, ſir, either by affinity or conſanguinity.

Bel. You can't tell but ſhe may.

L. Brid. You'll pardon me, brother, I do affirm ſhe is not of our family.

Bel. Then I do affirm ſhe is, for ſhe lives in the houſe; and ſhe may be nearer to you than you imagine.

L. Brid. His ſenſes are quite gone.

South. Faith, I think ſo; for he ſeems to me as if he had ſome thoughts of marrying.

L. Loui. No, no, my dear uncle is not quite ſo mad, ſir.

Bel. Don't be too ſure of that, my lady malapert; I hope I am old enough to take care of myſelf, without your advice or inſtruction, madam.

L. Brid. Don't oppoſe his inſanity, irritation may augment it.

Bel. By Hercules Farneſe, Lady Bridget, if you don't leave off your tricks, you'll put me in a deviliſh paſſion; and you had better be quiet, let me tell you.

South. For my part, I don't underſtand all this; I know not who is mad or ſober among ye; I think ye are all at a game of croſs purpoſes, and I wiſh I was ſafe in the country again.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Pleaſe your ladyſhip, ſupper is ſerved.

Bel. Is Miſs Lawſon in the parlour?

Serv. No, ſir; ſhe is not well, and deſires to be excuſed.

Bel. Oh! now 'tis plain that you have made her ſick ſomehow or other among ye—but I'll go comfort her as ſoon as ſupper is over.

SCENE

SCENE IV. *Another apartment.*

Enter Emily, *with a book in her hand.*

Emi. Reading's a charming exerciſe for minds at peace; books can even ſmooth affliction's furrow'd cheek, or change the ſource and channel of our tears, from ſelfiſh to humane; but when the mind is torn with doubts and fears, while mad contending paſſions labour in the breaſt, reaſon itſelf muſt fail to calm their diſcord; nor can the powers of eloquence or muſick attune the ſoul to peace or harmony.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Emily, I thank you for the condeſcenſion you have ſhewn to my requeſt, unknowing of the cauſe.

Emi. Your lordſhip's commands were rather an indulgence, than a force upon my wiſhes; I therefore claim no merit from obedience.

L. Bel. Your father is at preſent in this houſe, which will account to you for your confinement.

Emi. My father in the houſe! Will you not ſuffer me to ſee him, ſir? O! let me fly to him, and give a looſe to that ſoft ſorrow that overpowers my heart.

L. Bel. No, Emily; for a little time you have promis'd to be rul'd; I think you want not ſenſe or virtue to conduct yourſelf; but as I hope that by to-morrow we ſhall be able to clear up this dark ſcene which has perplex'd us, I wiſh you, for the preſent, to remain conceal'd: if my ſcheme ſhou'd fail, I then will give the reins into your hands, and ſuffer you to guide them.

Emi. It is an office I do not wiſh for—by nature and by providence deſign'd, our helpleſs ſex's ſtrength lies in dependance; and where we are ſo bleſt to meet with generous natures, our ſervitude is empire: to ſuch a ſtate I once aſpir'd, but Somerville is gone; how loſt my hopes of happineſs!

L. Bel.

L. Bel. Do not deſpair, Emily; you may poſſibly be nearer the completion of your wiſhes than you imagine; mean while, reſt aſſur'd of every thing, in the power of true friendſhip, to alleviate your diſtreſs.

Emi. An honeſt heart, my lord, is always grateful; but when oppreſs'd with obligations, it may want the power of utterance; I cannot thank you, but I feel your kindneſs.

L. Bel. My dear Emily, I am ſorry to leave you in this dejected mood; but I have two gentlemen to meet me upon buſineſs. I muſt therefore wiſh you a good night, and hope to-morrow's ſun will diſpel thoſe clouds that hang at preſent on your fame and mind. [*Exit.*

Emi. Let the bright radiance of unerring truth ſhine forth on Emily's every thought and action; and pity, not reproach, will then attend her. [*Exit.*

SCENE V. *Lord* Belmont's *library.*

Enter Elder Freeman *and a* Servant.

Serv. I ſhall let my lord know you are here, ſir. [*Exit.*

E. Free. What an amiable man is Lord Belmont! I think no perſon ſo happily unites the man of buſineſs and the nobleman; nicely exact in all his dealings, yet generous as the moſt diſſipated and extravagant; liberality and œconomy go hand in hand with him, and mutually ſupport each other.

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Your ſervant, Mr. Freeman; your accounts and mine agree exactly; I have look'd them over, the vouchers are all right: but I fear I have treſpaſs'd upon you, by deſiring to ſee you at an hour which men of buſineſs generally do, and always ought to give up to amuſement; but my being oblig'd to go into the country ſo immediately, will, I hope, plead my excuſe.

E. Free. I conſider my attendance on your lordſhip at any hour, as one of the rational pleaſures of a man

of

of buſineſs; as your converſation at once entertains and enlarges my mind.

L. Bel. You are extremely polite, Mr. Freeman, and I ſhall be glad of every opportunity to cultivate the friendſhip of a perſon, whoſe dealings, as a man, and manners, as a gentleman, I ſo much eſteem. If you can ſpare a little time from buſineſs, I ſhall be very glad of the pleaſure of your company in Worceſterſhire.

E. Free. I am extremely oblig'd to your lordſhip; but my father now growing infirm, his health requires a receſs from trouble and fatigue, and he paſſes moſt of the ſummer in the country; I therefore am confin'd.

L. Bel. You have a brother tho', whoſe attendance, I ſhou'd imagine, might ſet you free—he is bred to buſineſs, I think?

E. Free. Yes, my lord; but he is too fine a gentleman to follow it. The air of Lombard-ſtreet is too heavy for his conſtitution; he uſually reſides at this end of the town, has quitted buſineſs, and commenc'd fortune-hunter.

L. Bel. [*aſide*] As I ſuſpected. I fear then, Mr. Freeman, he will make but a bad exchange; both a man's means and manners ſhou'd be ſuited to his ſituation, before he can poſſibly make a figure in it.

E. Free. Nothing can be truer than your lordſhip's remark; but reaſon has no power over diſſipated minds, and experience alone can reclaim them: however, I will try once more to bring him back by argument.

L. Bel. I heartily wiſh you ſucceſs, Mr. Freeman.

E. Free. And I your lordſhip a good night.

L. Bel. Your moſt obedient, ſir. [*Exit Elder* Freeman. His brother certainly muſt be the man—How he cou'd poſſibly become acquainted with Louiſa, I can't conceive; but public places put every perſon on a level; and at ſome of theſe he muſt have ſeen her. To-morrow I will find this Freeman, and bring him to a ſevere account, both for Emily and Louiſa. [*Exit.*

END *of the* FOURTH ACT.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Diſcovers Lady Louiſa *at her toilet, her Maid waiting.*

L. Loui. GIVE me that book, and then you may withdraw; I ſhall not want you again to-night. [*Exit Maid.*] What can keep Freeman? does he ſleep when his good ſtars and mine are all awake! It ſeems as if the god of love himſelf had interfer'd, and diſpos'd of the whole family in ſuch a way as to prevent all interruption.—In ſhort, there never was, nor will be ſuch a charming opportunity.

Enter Younger Freeman.

O, Mr. Freeman! what cou'd tempt you to ſuch a dangerous act of indiſcretion? I ſhall be totally ruin'd if you ſhou'd be diſcovered.

Y. Free. Fear nothing, my angel, I will protect you from all danger; this happy night I ſhall become your guardian, and all my future life ſhall be devoted to your ſervice.

L. Loui. This night, did you ſay, Mr. Freeman? How is it poſſible?

Y. Free. If you conſent to bleſs me with your hand, we may eſcape this moment: I did not hear a creature in the houſe; they are all retired to reſt; then do not loſe this lucky criſis, but fly to love and happineſs this moment.

L. Loui. It will be deem'd ſo raſh a ſtep, I fear my brother never will forgive me.—Had we not better aſk his conſent?

Y. Free. [*aſide*] I muſt parry that ſtroke.—What are brothers, fathers, mothers, ſiſters, uncles, or aunts, to love? They might perhaps poſtpone our happineſs for ſettlements, and ſuch dull ſtuff; for I can aſſure your ladyſhip, there wou'd be no fear of a refuſal—the family of Freeman—

L. Loui. I have no doubt but my friends wou'd be extremely pleaſed with your alliance, ſir; and for that reaſon, wiſh we had conſulted them. *Y. Free.*

Y. Free. Why, ſo do I, ſince you ſeem now to deſire it; but, oh! my charmer, think what I muſt ſuffer by the leaſt delay? then let me gently preſs you to be mine; my chariot's at the garden-door.

L. Loui. I know not how to conſent, or to deny.

Y. Free. Dear, lovely angel, do not torture me, nor tear my faithful heart, with doubts and fears; you muſt, you ſhall be mine.

L. Loui. What will the world ſay of me?

Y. Free. Say, that you had love, generoſity, and ſpirit, to truſt a man of honour: but why will you thus waſte the precious minutes?

L. Loui. I find you can perſuade me to any thing.

Y. Free. Generous creature! now let us fly.

L. Loui. Ha! there's my ſiſter going to her chamber, which overlooks the garden; we muſt not ſtir, 'till ſhe is in bed. Step into the next room, as it is poſſible ſhe may come here. [*Exit Y. Freeman.*

Louiſa ſits at her toilet reading.

Enter Lady Mary.

L. Mar. What are you reading, Louiſa?

L. Loui. Pope's Homer, ſiſter.

L. Mar. Then you have no mind to compoſe yourſelf to reſt, I perceive; the loftineſs of the ſubject, and elegance of the language, will be apt to rouſe your attention, and keep you awake.

L. Loui. I am vaſtly ſleepy, notwithſtanding that.

L. Mar. Then I will not treſpaſs on your repoſe, tho' I am unaccountably wakeful.—Shall I go with you to your chamber?

L. Loui. No, ſiſter, I'll go with you to yours.

L. Mar. Come then, and if you have any good nature, you'll chat to me, while I undreſs. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Lord* Belmont's *library.*

Enter Lord Belmont.

L. Bel. Poor Charles!—at laſt he is gone—what difficulty have I had in perſuading him to ſeek for the only

only relief his preſent ſituation can admit of—reſt.—In ſome few hours, I hope his paſſions will be as much rais'd with joy, as they are now depreſs'd by anxiety; for, as I can have no doubt of Emily's conduct, or his honour, they muſt yet be happy. [*A noiſe of laughing.*] By that ſound, I perceive that jolly three-ſcore are ſtill at their bottle, perhaps they are in the right; age ſhou'd enjoy, or rather catch each paſſing moment of delight; youth ſhou'd huſband time, and ſpend it ſparingly; the ſpirit, not the lees of life, is worth preſerving.

Enter Sir Charles Somerville.

I hope you have met no accident to bring you back, Sir Charles?

Sir Char. I ſcarce have breath to tell you.—Paſſing again by your garden-door, I ſaw it ſtand open, and at a little diſtance, a chariot: I aſked the coachman who he waited for? he ſaid Mr. Freeman; he is this moment, in your houſe, my lord, upon ſome clandeſtine purpoſe.

L. Bel. You have amazed me; but let us act with caution, nor truſt my ſervants with my ſiſters honour—to one of them he comes. O Charles, this is a heavy trial.

Sir Char. It may not be ſo bad as you imagine; your own maxim is, to hope the beſt.

L. Bel. We are all philoſophers, when others ſuffer, but tremblingly alive to our own feelings. I'll go, this moment, and ſearch every apartment. Do you place yourſelf upon the center of the ſtair-caſe, and lock the folding doors—if the villain ſhou'd fly from me, you muſt meet him. But remember, Sir Charles, he is accountable to me this night, to-morrow he may anſwer you. [*Exeunt ſeverally.*

SCENE III. *Lady* Louiſa's *dreſſing-room.*

Enter Lady Louiſa.

L. Loui. Was there ever any creature ſo teizing, as Lady Mary? I really believe, if I had ſtaid with her,

her, ſhe wou'd have continued talking 'till morning. It is amazing that ſhe don't go to bed. I dare not let Mr. Freeman out, 'till I think ſhe is aſleep. Bleſs me, what noiſe is this?

Enter Lady Mary.

L. Mar. O Louiſa, my brother is this moment running from room to room, and ſearching every corner with his ſword drawn, and a wildneſs in his countenance, not to be expreſs'd: I am terrified to death.

L. Loui. I am undone! Freeman is in my chamber.

L. Mar. What ſhall we do? There may be murder if they meet.

L. Loui. I cannot ſpeak, or think.

L. Mar. Let him fly down the back ſtairs.

L. Loui. It muſt be ſo, there is no other way.—Do you return to your chamber. [*Exeunt ſeverally.*

SCENE IV. *A paſſage, with a chamber-door ſhut.*

Enter Young Freeman.

Y. Free. The ſtair-caſe door is lock'd, there's no retreating. If I cou'd get into any of the rooms on the middle floor, I wou'd leap out of the window, and hazard my neck, rather than bear to be expos'd. I hear Lord Belmont's voice, I'll force this door, at all events. [*Puſhes it open, and diſcovers Emily.* Ha! what has conjur'd up the only form, that at this moment cou'd encreaſe my terror?

Emi. Is it an apparition that I ſee! Defend me gracious heaven!

Y. Free. Dear madam, don't be alarmed; upon my knees I beg you will protect me; my life's at ſtake, and what is dearer ſtill, a lady's honour.

Emi. Inhuman wretch! you have already robb'd me of all that was moſt precious, my lover and my fame; I have now nothing but my life to loſe, and you may take it freely.

Y. Free. By heaven, madam, I never deſign'd you the leaſt injury; and if you have the ſmalleſt grain

of compaſſion, you will aſſiſt me to eſcape. I am abſolutely ruin'd if you don't, and ſo is Lady Louiſa. —Is there no way to get out?

Emi. Thou worſe than murderer! do not profane a lady's name, that I am certain knows you not; but if you have the leaſt compunction for all the ſorrows you have brought on me, ſay why you haunt me thus?

Enter Lord Belmont, *Lady* Mary, *and Lady* Louiſa.

L. Bel Now, ladies, this affair muſt be explain'd. —Who are you, ſir, that have thus broke into my houſe, at midnight, and taken refuge in this lady's chamber?

Y. Free. I'm at my laſt puſh; there is but one way. [*Aſide.*

L. Bel. This moment ſpeak, who are you?

Y. Free. A gentleman, my lord, but one, I muſt confeſs, who, tempted by ſtrong paſſion, has infring'd that juſt reſpect, which is your lordſhip's due, by entering your houſe without your knowledge: but love, my lord.

L. Bel. Of whom? declare that, inſtantly.

L. Loui. [*aſide*] Now I'm undone.

Y. Free. Your lordſhip will, I hope, excuſe my mentioning the lady, as ſhe is equally involv'd in this unlucky accident.

L. Bel. No trifling, ſir; explain yourſelf this moment. [*Sir* Charles *appears.*

Sir Char. [*aſide*] Sure 'tis a viſion! no, it is my Emily.

Y. Free. Will nothing, ſir, avail, to ſave the lady's honour?

L. Bel. Nothing ſhall ſave your life, ſir, but a fair confeſſion.

Y. Free. Why then, my lord, I muſt own, tho' very unwillingly, upon my honour, that I came hither by this lady's appointment. [*Points to Emily.*

Sir Char. Then all my fears are true, and I can hold no longer. [*comes forward*] Ungrateful woman.

Emi.

Emi. Good heaven! this is too much. [*Faints.*

L. Louiſa, *and Lady* Mary *carry her off.*

L. Loui. This is lucky, however. [*Aſide.*

L. Bel. I am ſtruck dumb with wonder.

Y. Free. [*aſide*] What the devil has brought him here?—Your lordſhip ſees how much you have diſtreſs'd the lady, by preſſing her to own her paſſion; ladies are apt to be baſhful, when there are ſtrangers by.—Perhaps Sir Charles may not know me. [*Aſide.*

Sir Char. I beg, my lord, you will inform me.

L. Bel. Pray, Somerville, be calm; at a proper time, I ſhall ſatisfy all your enquiries about Emily.—[*To Freeman.*] I have one queſtion more to aſk you, ſir.

Y. Free. I am ready to anſwer with the ſame truth, my lord.—Egad, I ſhall come off with flying colours. [*Aſide.*

L. Bel. Were not you in this houſe about ſeven this evening?

Y. Free. Why, as a man of honour, my lord, I can't poſſibly tell a lye; I was here about that time, but the lady was then afraid of being diſcovered, and deſired me to come at this hour, when we concluded the family wou'd be at reſt.

L. Bel. I am ſatisfied.

Y. Free. Why then, my lord, I beg leave to wiſh you, and the ladies, a very good night, and aſk a thouſand pardons for diſturbing your lordſhip's repoſe.—[*Going*] [*Lady Louiſa appears.*

L. Loui. [*aſide*] He has brought me off triumphantly, but I muſt ſee the event.

Sir Char. Stay, ſir, I have yet ſomething to ſay to you.

Y. Free. Well, ſir, pray what are your commands?

Sir Char. In that light you are to underſtand them, ſir, for they ſhall be obey'd.

Y. Free. You'll pleaſe to be as brief as you can, ſir, for it grows late.

Sir Char. That I have lov'd that wretched, hapleſs Emily, I need not now inform you; I have no doubt,

but ſhe has already gratified your vanity, by boaſting of the ſacrifice ſhe made, however worthleſs ſhe herſelf might think it.

Y. Free. Upon my honour, ſir, the lady never mention'd your name to me in her life.

Sir Char. No interruption, nor evaſion, ſir, they can't avail. Fallen as ſhe is at preſent, in my eſteem, I will ſtill, as far as ſhe has left it poſſible, preſerve her fame; you muſt marry her immediately, ſir.

L. Loui. Ha! what can this mean?

Y. Free. You are not in earneſt, ſir?

Sir Char. Quite determined.

Y. Free. You muſt excuſe me, ſir.—You do me honour.—But I have particular reaſons—which, at preſent, I cannot ſo well explain.

Sir Char. [*draws*] Villain, defend yourſelf.

L. Bel. [*interpoſes*] Not in this houſe, Sir Charles; I muſt not ſuffer it.

Sir Char. No place ſhou'd be a ſanctuary for ſuch a monſter.

Enter Mr. Belmont *and Mr.* Southerne.

Bel. Why, what the devil's the matter here! if you are for a bout of tilting, have with you, I'll be on the weaker ſide.

South. I ſay, what's the matter? I am a magiſtrate, and command the peace in the king's name.

Sir Char. [*To Free.*] We are prevented now; but if you do not chuſe to join the name of coward to that of villain, I ſhall expect to hear from you to-morrow.

Y. Free. Pray, ſir, hear me now.

South. Why, hey! what the devil is this? Here are the two fellows that ran away with my daughter; they ſhall give an account of her directly; who knows but they have murder'd her. I command you all to aſſiſt me to apprehend them.

Enter

Enter Emily, *and falls at Mr.* Southerne's *feet.*

Emi. Behold that wretched daughter at your feet, murder'd, indeed, in her loſt peace and fame; but ſtill alive to filial tenderneſs. O Somerville!

Bel. Why, Miſs Lawſon, what do you kneel to him for? get up, my pretty creature, and come to your own love; don't cry, don't cry.—Juſt as ſhe ſtands now, ſhe wou'd make a pretty model for a ſmall Niobe.

South. No, don't cry, child, and I'll make one of them, at leaſt, marry you, or I'll hang them both.

Bel. Neither of them ſhall have her; I'll marry her myſelf.

South. What, marry your niece, brother Belmont? Why don't you know Emily is my daughter?

Bel. None of your ſhams to me, I won't believe a word of it.

L. Bel. [*To Freeman.*] Have you had leiſure, ſir, to make your option, whether you will accept this lady for your wife, or vindicate your refuſal with your ſword?

Emi. What can you mean, my lord, why am I offer'd to that deteſted wretch? No power on earth ſhall force me to be his.

Sir Char. Well acted, madam, but the farce is done.

Y. Free. You hear, my lord, that the lady abſolutely refuſes, you would not be ſo cruel to compel her.

South. Ay, but I ſay I will compel her and you too; I'll have no more plague with her: this was the way ſhe ſerv'd me about Winterbottom; I wiſh I had made her marry him.

Bel. Egad, I begin to think ſhe is his daughter; and if that be the caſe, ſhe ſhall get a huſband.—Do you hear, you hatchet-face gentleman, that are very like my worſt medal of Nero, if you don't marry my niece directly, you ſhall have a couple of ounces of

lead in your ſtomach for breakfaſt, inſtead of your coffee to-morrow-morning; that is, if ſhe ſays you promis'd her marriage; but if not, you are at liberty to go about your buſineſs.

Y. Free. I dare appeal, ſir, to the lady's truth and honour; if ſhe ſays I ever promis'd to marry her, I am ready to do ſo this moment.

Bel. Why that's fair enough.

South. I ſay right or wrong, nolens volens, he ſhall marry her.

Y. Free. Pray, madam, ſpeak.

Emi. Though your inhuman artifices have undone me, I claim no promiſe from you, and call on heaven to witneſs, that 'till within this hour I never ſpoke to you, nor ſaw your face but once, 'till this unhappy night, in my whole life.

L. Bel. This is amazing!

Sir Char. By heaven ſhe does not bluſh! Sure, madam, you forget that I ſtand here. Is it not enough that you are ſunk in my eſteem? But will you teach me to deſpiſe myſelf, for having ever lov'd a woman that can be capable of ſuch mean, ſuch unavailing falſhood?

Emi. Sir Charles, I pity more than blame you.

Sir Char. Inſolent generoſity! But I diſclaim your pity; keep it, madam, for yourſelf, leſt you ſhould miſs it elſewhere.

Bel. Pray, ſir, don't ſcold my niece ſo; I don't ſee how ſhe has deſerv'd it from you.

Emi. O Somerville! is it poſſible you yet can doubt my innocence?

Sir Char. No, madam, I have no doubts; but beg you'll not profane a term that is your ſex's brighteſt ornament—your innocence!

South. Come, gentlemen, all this talk ſignifies nothing; one or other of ye muſt marry my daughter, that's certain. You have acquitted this gentleman, child; now what have you to ſay to the other? I can

ſafely

ſafely ſwear he promiſed to marry you, for he aſked my conſent.

Bel. If that be the caſe, I ſhall diſcourſe him preſently.

South. Come, don't be afraid to ſpeak, child; I am in a very good humour now; and if you have a mind for that ſame knight, before George he ſhall marry you, or I'll hamper him at law, that I will.

Emi. You are ſo kind to promiſe, ſir, you will confirm my option.

South. Ay, that I will, here's my hand for it.

Bel. And here's mine too, niece (tho' I am ſorry to call you ſo) that no man alive ſhall uſe you ill while I am able to draw a trigger, if it was only for ſake of that love I had for you, when I had a mind to be nearer related to you.

L. Bel. [*To Sir Charles.*] I cannot gueſs where this will end.

Sir Char. I am all impatience.

Emi. Tho' it muſt call a bluſh into a virgin's cheek, to own her love, before ſo many witneſſes, yet as it is the only declaration of this kind, that I ſhall ever make, I will confeſs, that dearer than my life or fame, I love Sir Charles Somerville,

Sir Char. Confuſion! Belmont, what can ſhe intend?

Emi. Pray hear me out, the difficulty's paſt: I have avowed my love: but were that man, whom my heart owns its lord, to ſue with all his former tenderneſs and paſſion, to obtain my hand, not worlds ſhou'd bribe me to beſtow it.

Bel. [*aſide*] That's very odd, tho'.

Emi. While in his heart there cou'd remain a ſingle doubt of my truth or honour; and as my injur'd fame is now obſcured, all I requeſt, is, that you will permit me to retire to ſome diſtant part of the world, where my unhappy ſtory is not known, and where my name may never bring diſgrace upon my family;

this, ſir, is my ſole requeſt, and you have promiſed me to grant it.

Sir Char. O Belmont, ſhe has torn my heart! but yet conviction cannot lye, my eyes, my ears, are witneſs of her falſhood.

Bel. By Jupiter Ammon, you ſha'n't go into any loneſome place, you ſhall live with me.

Sir Char. [*To Emily.*] Madam, the kind confeſſion you have made, at leaſt deſerves my thanks, and I am truly ſorry your conduct ſhou'd have contradicted it ſo far, as to make them the ſole return I can with honour offer.

Y. Free. [*aſide*] I begin to feel unhappy about this girl; I cou'd almoſt recant—but what becomes of Louiſa, then?

Emi. Had my reſentment and reſolves left it in your power to have ſhewn gratitude, in any other way, you never ſhou'd have known your obligation.

L. Bel. Still more and more myſterious. [*To Sir Charles.*] I know not what to think; but, let her faults be what they may, ſhe carries her puniſhment in her own breaſt, and bears it nobly.

Sir Char. [*To L. Belmont.*] I am diſtreſs'd, beyond all meaſure; I cannot ſtand this ſcene. [*To Emily.*] Madam, my ardent wiſhes for your happineſs, tho' with as little hopes of their ſucceſs, as thoſe I may beſtow upon my own, ſhall ſtill be yours—at preſent, I am ſure, I rather increaſe, than leſſen your diſtreſs, I therefore take my leave.

Emi. Adieu, for ever! [*Sir Charles bows, as going off.*

Enter Lady Louiſa, *and Lady* Mary.

L. Loui. Stay, ſir! though I were ſure to forfeit as much happineſs as Emily deſerves to poſſeſs, I cou'd not think of ſaving it at her expence.

Sir Char. [*To Lady* Louiſa.] Speak, madam, quickly ſpeak.

L. Loui. You muſt allow me time; I have a ſevere taſk to go through; and firſt muſt own myſelf unworthy

worthy of the moſt unbounded confidence, that a kind brother ever yet beſtowed, or a raſh girl abus'd.

Y. Free. [*aſide*] Sure the devil won't tempt her to betray herſelf!

L. Bel. Speak without fear, Louiſa, and be aſſur'd your motives for this generous confeſſion already have excus'd you.

L. Loui. Shou'd even the loſs of your eſteem, my lord, attend the knowledge of my fault, I cannot bear that innocence ſhou'd ſuffer, and therefore will avow it. That gentleman [*points to* Freeman] came here this night to me.

Sir Char. Impoſſible!

Y. Free. [*aſide*] I ſhall have my throat cut, that I ſee plainly.

L. Bel. By your appointment, ſiſter; who did he come to in the afternoon?

Sir Char. Aye, my lord, what brought him hither, at that time? This is what ladies call a pious fraud of friendſhip.

L. Mary. Equally inclin'd to clear that lady's character, tho' not equally involved in the conſequences, I own that I was acquainted with his viſit at that time. Your lordſhip may remember my confuſion, when you came up this evening.

Bel. Is the man bewitch'd? Did he court all my nieces, and won't marry any of them? I'll fight him with three caſe of piſtols.

South. I am in a ſtound, Brother Belmont; I don't underſtand all this.

L. Bel. I do remember that you ſeem'd diſtreſs'd, but pray was it to you he came? [*To Lady* Mary.

L. Loui. No, my lord, it was to me. Speak, Mr. Freeman, you have often told me your family and fortune might claim me for your wife; are you aſhamed of your attachment to me?

Y. Free. O, by no means, madam, tho' I may appear a little aukward at preſent.

L. Loui.

L. Loui. You ſee my brother is ready to forgive my folly, in carrying on a match clandeſtinely, that I might have own'd with honour; but indeed, my lord, it was my own romance, tho' I think Mr. Freeman has acquieſced rather too far.

Y. Free. Why, to be ſure, ma'am, it was entirely to gratify your ladyſhip's humour, that I did not at firſt apply to my lord.

L. Loui. I have confeſs'd it, ſir.

Y. Free. But ſince matters have taken this odd, ridiculous turn, I think it will be the beſt way to let my lawyer wait upon his lordſhip in the morning with my rent-roll; your ladyſhip ſhall have a carte blanche, I aſſure you, quite the ſame as if this affair had never happen'd. [*Aſide.*] Egad, I wiſh I was fairly out of the houſe.

L. Bel. [*aſide*] Inſolent puppy!

Y. Free. As matters ſeem now to be upon a proper footing, I think it will not be amiſs if I retire.

Sir Char. Hold, ſir, did not I find you in this lady's cloſet [*points to* Emily] one night at Bath? You did not come to Lady Louiſa there?

L. Loui. Ha! this I am quite a ſtranger to!

Y. Free. [*aſide*] Egad, it is all out now. Why, ſir, that this lady and I have met before is moſt certain. [*Points to* Emily.

Emi. Good heaven! can you perſiſt in ſuch inhuman falſhood?

Sir Char. O, 'tis quite clear, and this affair of Lady Louiſa's is all pretence, my lord.

L. Loui. 'Tis not unlikely, I may be deceiv'd. [*To* Emily.] You ſhou'd have own'd your acquaintance with Mr. Freeman ſooner, madam, and not ſuffer'd me to expoſe myſelf, by trying to ſave your character, which is already loſt.

L. Mary. Do not inſult her, ſiſter; if ſhe is innocent, it is a crime; if guilty, ſhe has load enough to bear.

Enter

Enter a Servant.

Serv. My lord, the gentleman who was with you, upon buſineſs to night, deſires to be admitted to you upon a very particular occaſion.

L. Bel. Bid him walk in. [*Exit* Servant.

Emi. Muſt my diſgrace be made the common topic, and I the public gaze? Let me retire, my lord.

L. Bel. No, Emily, I intreat your ſtay for a few minutes, perhaps this gentleman may be of uſe.

Emi. I have no right, my lord, to hope relief from ſtrangers, when love and friendſhip have abandon'd me. Yet I will ſtay, if you deſire it; for grief like mine is patient.

Enter Elder Freeman.

Y. Free. [*aſide*] Nay, then the devil does owe me a ſpite, and is reſolv'd to pay it.

E. Free. By the confuſion I read in my brother's face, my lord, I begin to think that my preſence is unneceſſary to his detection. But I beg the honour of ſpeaking a word or two to your lordſhip apart.

[*They retire to the ſide of the ſcene.*

L. Loui. His brother! 'Tis I that ſhall become the public topic now.

South. Hey day! Brother Belmont, what new adventure is going to open on us now?

Bel. [*To Lady* Mary.] I ſuppoſe this gentleman muſt be your humble ſervant, Lady Mary.

L. Bel. I am infinitely indebted to your friendſhip, ſir. Sir Charles, this gentleman has confirmed what Louiſa has before confeſſed. What is your opinion now?

Sir Char. I know not what to think, I am diſtracted; but ſtill that Bath affair dwells on my mind, and weighs down all my hopes.

Y. Free. Why, then, ſir, ſince Mr. John Freeman has thought proper to expoſe me before Lady Louiſa, and that I have no farther hopes of recovering her favour,

favour, I will, without reſerve, eaſe your mind and my own, by diſcovering the whole truth.

L. Bel. Do that, ſir, and you may find a friend, where you had reaſon to expect an enemy.

South. Ay, do, pray tell us how that ſame buſineſs came about.

Emi. Pray, ſir, do not keep me longer on the rack.

Y. Free. I muſt have time to bluſh a little before Lady Louiſa, madam, as I may poſſibly appear in her eyes a moſt unworthy wretch.

L. Loui. Nothing that you can ſay, ſir, will alter my opinion of you, or remove the contempt I feel for myſelf; ſo pray proceed.

Y. Free. Well, madam, [*to* Emily] the ſtory is but ſhort. You had a very pretty maid at Bath.

South. A bold, pert ſlut; Mrs. Southerne never liked her.

Y. Free. But I did, ſir, nor was ſhe in the leaſt cruel; and by her appointment I was paſſing thro' your chamber into hers, at the very inſtant that gentleman [*points to Sir* Charles] and you came into the room. She puſhed me into your cloſet, ſhut the door, and vaniſhed. The reſt you know too well.

Sir Char. How cou'd you, ſir, be ſo inhuman, to let my Emily ſuffer? O Belmont, I dare not look upon her.

Y. Free. Sir Charles, had your paſſion ſuffered you to have aſked me then my errand, I ſhou'd have frankly own'd it; but while I had hopes of Lady Louiſa, I could not, with any decency, have revealed theſe laſt particulars. And now, that I have done all in my power to ſet matters to rights, and atone my faults, I can only, in palliation of my behaviour, ſay, that it was not badneſs of heart, but diſlike to a ſedentary life, which tempted me to leave my ſphere, and ſoar at higher objects. In which, I am now ſenſible, I have juſtly failed; and muſt encounter the deſerved fate of thoſe, whom vanity ſeduces from the ſituation of life provided for them.

E. Free.

E. Free. The daring to confeſs we have been wrong, is not only the higheſt act of bravery, but the beſt ſecurity for our future amendment; and thus reclaim'd, I am proud to embrace my brother.

South. But what is all this to my poor child's character, that had like to be ruined by you, and that impudent baggage?

Emi. O, ſir, I am too happy to have my conduct cleared, both to the world and you! And yet, how gladly wou'd I now recall the fond confeſſion, which diſtraction wrung from my weak, ſinking heart, and now o'erwhelms me with bluſhes and confuſion.

L. Loui. You have no cauſe to bluſh; it is for weakneſs, ſuch as mine, to ſink under my own reproach.

L. Bel. You are both too rigid to yourſelves; but there is one who well deſerves your pity, becauſe he fears to aſk it.

Sir Char. I do not, my lord, preſume to aſk for Emily's forgiveneſs, nor dare I form a hope that ſhe ſhou'd grant it.

Emi. Sir Charles, I do not wiſh to triumph over your humility, but beg you will allow me to indulge my own generoſity, by aſſuring you, that thro' this whole affair I never once condemned, but pitied your miſtake.

Sir Char. My generous Emily!

Bel. Why, what is all this about? If you like my niece, why don't you come and take her, and her pity, and her pardon together, and I'll give you a good five thouſand pounds into the bargain. Come, brother, give her hand to Sir Charles, and let's make an end of it.

South. With all my heart, brother, if they are both willing, for I promiſed my lord to give my conſent.

L. Bel. Now, Emily, it reſts on you alone, to ſhew that noble minds moſt eaſily forgive.

Emi. I have been only on the defenſive, my lord, during this whole warfare; and ſuch an enemy is ge-

nerally ready for terms of peace; therefore if you ſhou'd hold out the olive branch in my name, to your ally, you may ſuppoſe I ſhall accede to the treaty.

Sir Char. No words can ſpeak my gratitude; my heart's too full for utterance. Tranſporting charmer! every way you have conquer'd and ſubdued me, by eſteem, as well as love.

L. Bel. *From theſe events, the innocent may know,*
That ſuffering is the leaſt part of woe;
While our own conduct vindicates from blame,
Slander defeated, but augments our fame.

FINIS.

A c.
An Epi.
'Tis moſt un.
But they ſo coa.
Leſt I ſhould fret—
That, in obedience to
A ſuppliant to your favo.
And hope, inſtead of what
Some nonſenſe of my own, m.
Well! I have had a great eſc.
From being made the jeſt of all th.
For from the court end I could claim.
Nor had I more to hope for, from the city
Such matches rarely anſwer either ſide,
For induſtry is ſuited ill with pride.
But, to divert your cenſure, let me ſhew
A folly more compleat, a city beau!
What contraſt can there be ſo ſtrong in nature,
As Engliſh plainneſs apeing petit-maître!
And yet poor I, by miſſing ſuch a lover,
May wait, 'till all my dancing days are over!
Next, ſhift the ſcene—behold a virtuoſo!
An old illiterate, feeble amoroſo!
What weakneſs can the human heart diſcover,
More ſhameful, than a climacteric lover?
Men, who have turn'd the period of threeſcore,
Become mere virtuoſo's—in amour.

Nor